
CAMBRIC
TEA
by
Rebecca
Lowrie
HARPERS



FROM THE BOOKS OF
Marcia M. Lescher

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BY

REBECCA LOWRIE



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To

E. C. M.

and

J. M. L.

WHEN out of the house of your childhood you are departing,
Where you suffered, where you joyed, in the old confused childish way, not certainly distinguishing things,
Now suddenly, as you leave, how it all becomes clear, as in a kind of new and incomparable light!

This is the corner where your little bed stood against the wall, this the window where the moon peeped, and the white and ghostly dawn came;
These are the closed rooms and chests into which you were so seldom permitted to look; this was the daily routine of life which for some inscrutable reason was so rigidly adhered to;
These are the stairs where up and down moved such queer processions—funerals and weddings and bustling visitors and elderly aunts and uncles, and the parson and the doctor in their turn;
And you were bade stand aside since you could not understand—
But now you understand it all.

* * * * * * * * * * * * *

When at last Death comes, then all of Life shall be to us as the house of our childhood—
For the first time we shall really possess it.
But who is ready to die to life now, he even now possesses it.

—EDWARD CARPENTER in *Towards Democracy*

CAMBRIC TEA

Cambric Tea

THE house of childhood is not a house of many mansions. It is a house of little rooms, whose doors are ready to swing open at the gentlest touch, sometimes even to swing open of themselves.

There is nothing mysterious about this, as about other abandoned houses. Little familiar things are always stirring about among the shadows, playing games that you used to play or sitting solemnly in their corners thinking the thoughts that you used to think. And once you have gone inside you feel quite cozy and snug, as though you had never been away.

So you set to work dusting off the chairs and tables and putting the tea set to rights in the cupboard, and making the sea shells march in a straight row across the mantelpiece. . . .

I

"Not only round our infancy doth Heaven
With its splendours lie. . . ."

THE CHILD WAS BORN IN A MEDIUM-SIZED frame house which was painted yellow. A photograph which her aunt had colored still shows the geraniums very red and the clematis very purple against its yellow sides. It was a tall and rather slender house, with turrets and a cupola and little railings elaborately carved. It was, architecturally speaking, an Early Cleveland house. The front door was very impressive. Half of it was wood, also carved, and the top was a dazzling combination of blue and magenta-colored glass. By flattening your nose against a magenta pane you could see into the dark hall, miraculously turned magenta, even the umbrella stand and the hat rack, until a look through the blue pane turned them blue.

The child's memories of the medium-sized house centered about her mother's room. Here there was a tall bed, with two

little steps beside it. There were three straight-backed rockers with "tidies" hung like bibs over their backs. On one of the tidies was embroidered "Rest Here," and on another, "Rock-a-by-Baby." Against the wall stood a washstand with a square of tan-and-white oil cloth under it and a splasher at its back. On a low table was her mother's work-basket with rows of tidy spools, each one with the loose end of thread caught in the little slit on the rim. There were empty spools, too, on which basting threads were wound when they had served their original purpose.

The walls were covered with pictures. Clustered about the bureau were photographs: father, very dashing, with his President Arthur whiskers; mother, in her green plush dress with fringe; mother and father on their wedding trip crossing a photographer's stile; mother's best friend, Aunt Sophie, in a frame made of sea shells. . . . Over the washstand was a lithograph called "Their Daily Bath," six kittens being licked by their mother. There was one picture which the child loved. Her mother said that it had "associations,"

which meant that she loved it, too. It represented a beautiful girl leaning over the side of a rowboat to pull water-lilies, while a thin, romantic young man (bearing not the least resemblance to the child's father) rested his arms languidly on the oars.

The rest of the house was quite like her mother's room. It was spotless, almost aggressively so. Nothing ever changed its position. The big bronze vase from the World's Fair was lifted from the center table every morning while the ring of dust was removed, and back it went to make the same ring of dust for the next day's cleaning.

The parlor was kept closed, with the blinds drawn to keep the sun from fading the Brussels carpet which her grandfather had bought from A. T. Stewart's store in New York City. The chairs were grouped in a wide circle about the mahogany table. They had black hair seats and the more favored ones had pontifical lace tidies over their backs.

The pride of the parlor was the row of life-sized colored photographs—the child's

mother and father and one of her brother Ernest, a year old, sitting naked on a purple cushion, holding grimly and obediently to one foot and looking with studied melancholy at the photographer.

From the medium-sized house the child could watch the progress of the new house, across the street, in which they were going to live, she and mother and father and Ernest, and Marian and grandmother and Ellen. And by the time that they moved into it she was perfectly familiar with its every corner. The new house was large, and was built of white stone. It was considered a very splendid house, so splendid that there were colored post-cards of it in the book store. It had bay windows and turrets and a wide front porch with marble pillars around it. Inside, it was a shining marvel of bird's-eye maple and hardwood floors. Often, when the child was older, she tried to separate the impressions of the new house which had come since she had consciously observed it, from the dim memories that belong in those early days.

There was, for instance, a corner of the front parlor (in the new house there were

two parlors, front and back) into which she used to go to play a game. There was no other place in the house where she could play this particular game. Her father had bought a bronze statue of David at the World's Fair and it stood on a marble pedestal in one of the bay windows. David was throwing a pebble from the sling, and in spite of Biblical reassurance she was not quite sure of his aim. For a long time she thought that Goliath was hidden under the sofa. Then, in one of the seasonal rearrangements of the parlor furniture, she saw that the sofa springs occupied what had been Goliath's cave, and after that she was never afraid. Then she used to play that she was David's sister. She called herself Miriam. She would take cookies down to the parlor in a little basket, and would talk to David. Once, in a blaze of courage, she offered to fight Goliath in his stead. But hummocks of cookie crumbs were a desecration of the parlor, and discovery being sure and swift in an immaculate household, the child was forced to send David out to battle hungry. But David was the great Romance. And to this day

his corner is as clear before her eyes as though she had only to put out her hand to touch his cool bronze back. . . .

The carpet stopped where the bay window began, and the statue stood in the center of a small hardwood space. The windows were hung with écru lace curtains and tan brocade. Just where the carpet began there was a little gold chair with spindly legs on which the children were never allowed to sit. The colored photographs, now banished to the back parlor, were replaced by water-colors, Venice by moonlight and cows standing by a sunny pool.

Next to the bay window, the child loved the alcove off her grandmother's room. Grandmother lived on the first floor of the new house, so that she would not have to climb the slippery polished stairs that were "gone over" twice a week with more polish. The alcove held her desk and a big chair. The room itself had been furnished with the rest of the house and contained an oak "set" from a furniture company in Grand Rapids. Grandmother's desk did not match the set. It was a high mahogany

secretary. Its top was divided into three compartments, two with tiny panes of glass and one with a door which locked. In this grandmother kept packages of letters tied with twine, or faded ribbon, labeled, "Letters from my dear Chas.," "Nellie's letters," "Letters from Ernest and Marian." In the other compartments were her books, religious books mostly—a large prayer-book, a hymnal, a smaller prayer-book, a large worn Bible, and a small Bible, not so worn, Dr. Hopkins on the Ten Commandments, Baxter's *Saint's Rest*, and the *Lives* of a number of clergymen and missionaries.

But what always lured the child to visit her grandmother were the little white books. They held great fascination for her. There were perhaps twenty-four of them, about four inches high, bound in a slippery white material. It must have been parchment. Their titles were printed in gold letters entwined with leaves and flowers. Long before she knew the alphabet she used to pretend to read them.

There is a memory stored away in her mind of a late summer afternoon when she

was sitting beside her grandmother on a hassock poring over one of them while a caller commented on her quiet. "What a little student we are!" she said with the special lift of the eyebrows which older people use when talking to children, and the little girl looked up at her, pretending that she had interrupted her reading. She wished intensely that grandmother would give her one of the little books. So far as she could see, grandmother never read them. She prayed for one—ineffectively. Then she decided to steal it. There was one in particular. Its name was *Nature's Garland.* One Sunday morning grandmother was at church; the same key fitted all three of the compartments and she had no difficulty in finding the book she wanted. It left a gap in the row of white backs, so she carefully moved each of the books just enough to hide the space. Then she fled upstairs, the book tightly wedged under her Ferris-waist. She took it to Sunday school with her, fearing to leave it, and all the time it grew more and more of a weight. It made her stomach ache, as though she had swallowed it. She was

afraid that it would slip out and fall to the floor every time the class got up to sing, so she "breathed out" as hard as she could, to leave no possible room for its escape. After Sunday school a neighbor, a druggist who had a buggy, took the child and her sister home. They sat two-deep. She was a stocky child and, not wanting to be too heavy on the lap of the druggist's wife, she made herself as light as possible, but the shift of breath started the book sliding and she suddenly grew stiff and solid again.

After dinner her grandmother went into her room to take a nap. Her father and mother were on the porch reading *The Christian at Work* and *The Herald and Presbyter*. Her brother Ernest was out somewhere; the soft plump that came at regular intervals from behind the tightly closed barn doors suggested that he was playing with a new ball that had come with subscriptions to the *Youth's Companion*. Her sister Marian was having Sunday school for the dolls, upstairs. The little girl stood in the hall, an Ishmael in the midst of her family. The book had lost its charm. Her one idea was to get it back

to its shelf. She wished that mother would take grandmother for a walk. She wondered if she would be sent to a reform school, to which she had heard they sent children who stole. She wished, too, that her sister would ask grandmother to "address" the dolls—in the nursery—but then there were the slippery stairs to climb. The drowsy calm of the Sunday afternoon went on, and the book was a burning weight. . . . It was absurdly easy to slip it between the cushions of grandmother's chair and scurry upstairs in a glow of atonement.

II

"Good morning, dear teacher;
Good morning to you."

THERE WAS MORE THAN A DIFFERENCE IN age between the child and her sister Marian. It was a difference of temperament and of spirit. The child, ardent, sensitive, jealous, could not understand the privileges awarded to superior years and virtues. Marian was small and dark-haired, with an ivory-white skin. She wore her hair short, and this gave her a boyish look, which was accentuated by her slimness and the straight lines of her dresses. She was a very good child; at least, older people thought her good. There was a jubilant quality to her goodness which used to send her unruly younger sister into hot speechless rages.

Marian had reached very early the period of intense religiousness. She, too, had a passion for small books, a perfectly legitimate passion, directed toward Testaments, Gold Dusts, and hymnals. She

always took two or three of them to bed with her, a practice which the child found most uncomfortable.

Both the little girls went to kindergarten. Marian stayed there a year, even after she was old enough to go to the public school. She was pointed out to the other children and to occasional envious parents as an ideal child. She was very neat and painstaking with the chains of looped and pasted colored paper that used to occupy a part of every morning, and she always knew the words of the play-songs perfectly.

After kindergarten she would put the dolls through the day's events, beginning with,

> "Good morning to you,
> Good morning to you,
> Good morning, dear children,
> Good morning to you,"

and ending with the song where heads were folded under reluctant arms in imitation of sleepy birds. The dolls, being a degree less elastic than children, balked utterly at this.

The child could never understand Mar-

ian's attitude toward dolls. Dolls never interested her except for brief periods of gusty affection. They were never her children. She cared nothing at all about their clothes, their souls, or their educations. For a while she thought that they were princesses under some enchantment from which they were released at midnight. But after a few attempts to stay awake and see them then, she began to have doubts, and a little later lost all curiosity about them. Marian, however, was minutely concerned with them. She wrote their names and their dates of accession in the blank leaves of her Bible, nursed them through the epidemics through which the three children had gone at one time or another, dressed them twice every day, and laboriously reversed their leg joints at night so that they might pray before being put to bed.

There is a lack of continuity now in the child's recollections of her first years. There are detached memories, very vivid and recurring, of comparatively trivial incidents. Some of these extend very far back into the hinterland of childhood, almost

before any individual consciousness emerged. Events when she was between six and seven are fairly consecutive in her mind. This was at the time that she started going to school. There was a year's interval in her case as in her sister's, but for a different reason. She had been like a calf in the kindergarten, unwieldy and "out of harmony with its spirit"—this was the kindergartner's explanation to her mother when she suggested that she be kept at home.

School was different. There was a great sense of bustle and importance as she went over to the first room. She thought that she had begun to live. The new house was a short block from the school, but the child wanted to take her lunch in a little tin box, to be eaten on the stone platform around the pump at recess. All the little girls of her age wore long-sleeved aprons and just about this time came the epoch of plaid stockings. One began to feel an æsthetic interest in one's legs, whose beauty varied with the width and colors of the squares. This was also the time of having hands inspected by the teacher as one came to school

in the morning. Miss Norton stood in the door of the "wardrobe" where one hung one's hat and coat, and with an impartiality born of long habit and keen observation, looked at one's hands. If they were not clean, or only clean to the wrists, one was sent to the basement to wash them. This furnished a few minutes of diversion, though with the more sensitive children it was the occasion for tears and a day of shame. Once the child was discovered with dirty hands. Miss Norton was amazed and pained. How ashamed her family would be if she were sent to the basement to wash her hands! Miss Norton felt sure that the dirt had been acquired on the way to school. The child assured her that this was not so. The disgrace grew in proportion. Her name appeared on the list which was kept in brown chalk, instead of the list symbolically inscribed in white.

In that first room there was an aristocracy of conduct and to a less degree an aristocracy of nascent minds. There was an A class, a B class, and a C class. Each class had three rows. Each row had six seats. The seats were numbered and one

was branded by one's number. The first seat of the first row of the A class, left nothing to be desired in heaven or earth. Even an A* I* I* child had days of laxity, however, and there were always plenty of interlopers. The little girl spent two precarious days in that seat; then a "z" instead of a "g" in "fig" reduced her. She knew that "fig" is not spelled "fiz," but the attraction of the wriggling written letter was too much for her somewhat fragile virtue, and she sank gradually back to the proletarian security of the second seat of the fourth row.

The single day that stands out with the greatest distinction in that first year at school was sharpened by an averted tragedy. On her birthday the child's father had given her a small diamond ring. She was allowed to wear it only on Sundays. One day she slipped it into her pocket and wore it in school. It was too large, and somehow or other it slipped off. She did not discover its loss until late in the morning. Then she was terrified. Under cover of the First Reader she searched the desk. No ring. She

went miserably home to dinner, and not even "floating island," her favorite dessert, could tempt her to eat. "Have you been eating candy?" her mother asked, and when assured to the contrary she felt the hot little forehead. Domestic inquiries usually began and ended with stomach or head. After dinner she hurried back to school and searched about the desk before school began. Miss Norton saw her. "Have you lost something?" she asked. "No," the child gulped and shook her head. The afternoon dragged leadenly by. A few minutes before the bell rang she could stand it no longer and burst into tears. Miss Norton cuddled her in her arms with her quick kindness and she sobbed out the story. She asked a few questions while the children sat wide-eyed and gaping. Then she became the disciplinarian again and told the "captain" in each row to look up and down between the aisles. It made them vastly important, for it was the first time in the cycle of that room that being a "captain" had meant more than to be the first to "turn, rise, pass" at recess. The ring was found under

a near-by desk leg, where it had rolled. "You had better not wear it to school," said Miss Norton as she gave it back. Then the children took their seats and sang,

"Good-by, dear teacher, and dear playmates, too,"

before they went home. That night the little girl dreamed of crawling on her hands and knees up a mountain, and each time she got to the top a mysterious hand pushed her off and said, "You have forgotten your ring; you can't come up without your ring."

The second grade was full of new experiences. The Reader grew fatter. There were words with more than two syllables. It no longer pointed a derisive finger at a picture and said

"SEE ME. I AM A BIRD—
I AM A YELLOW BIRD. . . ."

Instead it told stories.

"I AM VERY BUSY," SAID MARY, WITHOUT LOOKING UP FROM HER DOLL.

"SO ÅM I," SAID CLARA.

"COME, FRED," SAID MAMMA. SHE HAD A CAKE IN HER HAND. "SUCH BUSY LITTLE GIRLS HAVE NO TIME TO EAT CAKE," SHE SAID.

One learned these stories by heart. At first one read them over to oneself, moving one's lips as noiselessly as possible while pronouncing the words. Then, when Miss Smith said, "B class, ready to read," one pulled oneself into reading position, feet squarely on the floor, book held straight out before one, and back braced against the seat, and began.

One rose when one was called, assorting arms and legs and putting them "in position" in the aisle. Then one straightened one's shoulders, took a long breath and began,

"THE WIND AND THE SUN.

sun	quárrel	strónger
blew	shone	hótter

ONCE THE WIND AND THE SUN HAD A GREAT QUÁRREL."

Here one paused. A period meant pause. So did a new paragraph. Both together meant a long pause. Besides, there was a great relief at being safely past that word. One had heard it before, but was not sure what it looked like written out.

"THE WIND SAID HE WAS STRÓNGER THAN THE SUN. THE SUN SAID HE WAS STRÓNGER THAN THE WIND. THEY WISHED FOR SOME WAY TO SEE WHICH WAS STRÓNGER."

As soon as one's turn to read had passed one could keep a finger in the place and turn over to the back of the book where there were other stories, with longer words and more exciting things happening.

In the A class there were Supplementary Readers. The adventure of learning grew apace. Supplementary reading came Friday afternoon, instead of "exercises." Three of the boys were sent to the school library to get the readers. They came back staggering under the load. There were never enough readers to go around,

so the child who did not have one could double up with the child who did—with an eye to the segregation of sexes.

The Supplementary Readers did not preface their remarks with lists of words. They assumed great knowledge and one was flattered, and humbly grateful to them. There were stories about Daniel Boone and Grace Darling, Ethan Allen and Abraham Lincoln. Poetry unrelated to the First Music Book. The little girl liked Poetry. She liked to pretend that she had written it herself. Best of all she liked the melancholy of

"I found my poor little doll, dears,
As I played in the heath one day;
Folks say she is horribly changed, dears,
For her paint is all washed away,
And her arm trodden off by the cows, dears,
And her hair not the least bit curled;
Yet for old sake's sake she is still, dears,
The prettiest doll in the world."

This and "We Are Seven" were her favorite poems in the First Supplementary Reader. They brought a delicious sadness into the waning Friday afternoon, and left

her with a great longing to write about her own loss or even death.

Life spread out in many directions from now on. Instead of going out to recess before the big girls, the little girls went out with them. They twined arms and wandered about the playground; they drank great quantities of water at the pump; they played "Farmer in the dell" instead of "London Bridge is falling down" and learned a new, and to their minds distractingly funny, formula for counting out. "Einy, meeny, miny mo" sank into the background of the kindergarten and they said with the big girls:

> "Queen, Queen Caroline
> Washed her face in turpentine
> O-U-T spells Out goes S H E."

This was made even more pleasant because one hammered closed fist with closed fist—vastly more mature than pointing a finger at the object of one's passing attention.

With her initiation into the third room slates went out of the little girl's life—so, too, did the slate rag. Instead she used ink. There had been inkwells in her desk

before and she had used them for beetles and lady-bugs, which she set free when occasion demanded. Now she had to keep them in her pencil box and they were apt to get away. Bugs were very restless.

After one entered the second room, the last shreds of the kindergarten habit disappeared and instead of singing affably to dear teacher and schoolmates one began to sing out of books, with wider emotional range. There was "Flow Gently, Sweet Afton" the perfection of which involved two visits of "old Do-re-mi," the singing teacher who made weekly rounds of the city schools. After the second grade, which was largely Victorian in its music, one reached the "Soldiers' Chorus" in the third, and this remained the *pièce de résistance* of the other five. One always sang it before examinations and holidays, varied and enlivened by "Jingle Bells" at Christmas and

"Over the river and through the woods
To grandfather's house we go.
The horse knows the way
To carry the sleigh
Through the white and drifted snow"

at Thanksgiving. The fifteen minutes devoted to singing gave one a chance to stretch and to make a noise with one's throat which was a great offense at any other time, and meant being sent to the "wardrobe." The wardrobe was the arch punishment of the lower grades. It varied in efficacy, however. If one's best or even second-best friend sinned nobly and was sent out with one, there were pleasant diversions. Sometimes there were three or four children there at a time, mercifully relieved from the necessity of bounding Maine or parsing the preamble to the Constitution. If one had taken the precaution, feeling the pull of sin strong within one before coming to school, to put a story-book or an all-day sucker in one's coat pocket, the wardrobe was a green isle in the sea.

III

" . . . and as he journeyed, he came near Damascus; and suddenly there shined round about him a light . . ."

ALMOST AT THE BEGINNING OF THINGS for the child there was Ellen. All the way along there was Ellen. It is very hard to give in words just the quality of a human person—all the dearness and kindness and simplicity. And to analyze Ellen would be to take away something of her uniqueness, something of that which made her the beloved person of the little girl's life.

Ellen was her nurse. She had been Marian's nurse first, but she always called the child her baby, and when the child grew older she was very careful not to let Marian claim any rights of priority. Ellen's sister Signa had been the cook, and Ellen used to come over after school in the afternoon to help Signa take care of Marian. Ellen was about fifteen when she first came, just getting through the eighth grade.

It used to delight the child to hear Ellen tell about the first time that she saw her: "And your papa said, 'Well, Ellen, don't you want to hold her?' And I said, 'Oh, I'm afraid that I'll drop her'; and Ernest said, 'Huh! hasn't she got any feet?' "

Ellen would tell this over and over. She never added anything to the story and never left anything out. The child used to wish that she would just imagine some little thing, but she didn't. To imagine with Ellen was to lie. She used to try very hard to break her baby of doing it.

For a long time Ellen was the child's chief system of chronology. She had Thursday and Sunday afternoons out. On Wednesday night the thought of Thursday began to oppress the little girl, and her mother never understood why she had spells of long and apparently purposeless crying after she had gone to bed. Once some one remarked to her mother, in that silly way that grown up people have, "She loves Ellen more than she does her mamma, doesn't she?" and after that she would not let her be with Ellen nearly so much as before. But Thursday after-

noon was marked off in drab from the rest of the week. It wasn't so bad after the beginning of school, but before that and during vacations she was miserable.

Ellen lived up the street from the new house, and by standing with her nose flattened against the library window the child could see her as soon as she came in sight past the Mary Street corner. This was all very well in the summertime, when it stayed light until long after bedtime. In the winter she would lie in bed and pretend to be asleep, but Ellen always knew that she would find her awake and sleepily peaceful again to know that she was in the house.

The child could hear her in the hall, outside the door of the nursery. Her mother and father were reading at the other end of the hall. A fresh, cold breath of air had come in with Ellen's clothes. "She is asleep," mother would say a little sharply, and Ellen would go back and take off her coat and hat. Then she would tiptoe back to the door and the child would hear her saying, half apologetically, to

mother, "I'll just go in and see if she has kicked off the covers."

The memory of many Thursday nights, lumped now into one continuous recollection of being hugged to Ellen's dear, rather bony breast, still gives the child a sense of safety and of great relief.

When she was five she went on a visit. It was in the winter. Her brother and she went to stay with their aunt, who lived at the other end of the town. They went because Marian was sick, and they thought it was a great lark. The doctor had come up to the house one evening just as the children were getting ready for bed, and after a few minutes upstairs their mother had called down to Ellen to tell her to pack their little bags and take them down to Aunt Sarah's. They thought that was delightful. It was the first time they had ever spent a night away from home and they left in great excitement. Aunt Sarah met them at the door and cried a little. Ellen cried, too. The child thought that was odd, though, of course, one might expect Ellen to cry at losing her even for a

few days. On their Aunt Sarah's part it seemed hardly hospitable. Ellen told the child to be sure to pray for Marian, but since she was included in the list which God was asked to "please bless" she did not pay any special attention. As a matter of fact, she usually made the same request for Marian that she did for herself, to insure the smoothness of the day: "Dear God, please bless me and make me a good girl. Please bless Marian and make her a good girl."

After Ellen went back home, Aunt Sarah gave the children milk and cookies, and they began going to bed again. Aunt Sarah was their father's sister. The child thought her rather a fussy person, letting her do things that her mother would not and not letting her do the things that her mother would.

At the time she tolerated Aunt Sarah chiefly because she seemed in some mysterious way to possess the most delightful being she had ever seen—Uncle James. He was a tall, spare man, very loosely put together, with scanty gray hair and a scanty little Vandyke beard. He had gray-

ish eyes, a little small but pleasant, and his face seemed always to be trying to make you guess what he had to show you.

In the daytime, when Uncle James was in the bank where he was a cashier, Aunt Sarah played with the child. She called it "amusing her." She had never had children of her own, but her house was filled with old toys and odds and ends which she had always kept. In the morning when Aunt Sarah sewed up in the "spare" room she would bring out the "treasures" which were kept in the top drawer of a white maple bureau. There was a small Japanese basket with red and gold tassels on top, and inside it were two Japanese dolls with stiff black hair and bright kimonos. Their bodies were made of a tough rice paper, and their hands, feet, and heads were plaster of Paris. The little girl had only a passing interest in them, but all the affection she had was given to three brown wooden bears from Bern—all just alike except for size. In the spare room there was a delightful carpet for playing with bears. It had a dark green border which made an exciting wood, and there were

paths leading around it and out into a garden of roses in the center.

There were mountains to climb in Aunt Sarah's house; dark stairways; caves in closets; and a heavy bear rug which could be made into a splendid tunnel by humping it over two chairs. The child traveled over all the countries of the world, there in her Aunt Sarah's little frame house—on her hands and knees, always with the three brown bears, who were really princes in disguise.

She did not see her brother very often. He went to school, and after school he played with some little boys on the corner. It used to worry Aunt Sarah to have the child go out of doors because she was afraid she would have a sore throat (like Marian), and when they did walk down to the grocery store together she was always so smothered in flannels and coats that she could hardly breathe.

About five o'clock, before Uncle James came home from the bank, the child would go into the front room to watch for him. As soon as he turned up the walk to the porch she would see that "Guess what I've

got to show you" expression on his face, and would rush out to meet him.

Ernest and the child sat up much later than they did at home. After supper Uncle James would settle them on the sofa by the window while he cleared the other half of the room of furniture and made certain mysterious preparations with a small chair in the library. Then he would stand away from the chair and call to it. It would make a lunge toward him. Then Ernest would call it—almost falling off the sofa in his excitement—but it stood still, just like any other chair. Then Uncle James would tell it to dance, and it would make spasmodic jumps, sometimes so violent that it fell over. The little girl knew that in some way Uncle James made the chair jump. Chairs didn't do such things of themselves; they sat still and were sat on. She loved Uncle James for his power over chairs. One evening there was a very elaborate exhibition. A young man who lived next door, and who was going to be a lawyer, did tricks with string. Uncle James's chair performed with unusual vigor and Aunt Sarah gave them all pop-

corn balls and milk. The child wanted to stay with her Uncle James and Aunt Sarah always.

The next day Aunt Sarah told the children that Marian was worse. She cried a great deal and hardly let them out of her sight. She made Ernest come directly home after school and they sat in the parlor, on the sofa. Ernest moved off it every few minutes to inspect Uncle James's trained chair. There was a piece of strong black thread tied on the leg. Aunt Sarah told Ernest to let it alone, and looked over at the child, shaking her head. She put them to bed early. The next morning she told them that Marian had died about ten o'clock. They both stood still. Then Ernest said, "I heard the telephone ring."

Aunt Sarah told them that they were to go home that afternoon and that they would have to be fumigated with the rest of the house. The child cried a little, for she did not want to be fumigated. Ernest stayed home from school, but they couldn't play. They both sat on the slippery hair sofa and watched the people passing in the street. Aunt Sarah let them feed the

canary. By and by John Johnson came for them with his black hack and they went home.

There was a wreath of white roses, with bay leaves intertwined, hanging on the door.

"That's for Marian," Ernest explained. Some instinct kept the children from ringing the bell and made them tiptoe in when Ellen, who had been watching for them, opened the door.

Inside the house everything was very still. Ellen took off their wraps and kissed them. Then she said: "You go up and love your mamma. She hasn't got any other little girl now." The child crept up to mother's room. It was dark and quiet. Her mother was asleep. So the child sat on her little stool in the hall.

So that was what had happened. Marian wasn't a little girl any more. Something had made her different. . . . It had made her go away. . . . If she was away, how could anyone know that she was different? . . . Did people come back after they had gone away? . . . Was Marian likely to come back for Christmas? . . .

There was the doll trunk that mother had bought. . . . It was in the closet in the spare room. . . . What was to become of that? . . . Grandmother had gone away. . . . She had never come back afterward. . . . But Marian was different. . . . She was a little girl, and there was a doll trunk waiting for her. . . . Where had Marian gone, anyway?

There was heaven, of course. Both Aunt Sarah and Ellen had mentioned it, but the child was not entirely sure about it. And then there was hell. Ward, the hired man, talked a great deal about that. In many ways it sounded pleasant, full of nice people. And Belle, the cook, had told about purgatory, a place where one took off one's hat and passed the time of day.

Ernest could not tell the child very much. He said that you couldn't choose where to go. He had an idea that what you "had" made some difference. "You can't go to heaven if you're catching," he said. "No measles or whooping-cough or sore throats. That's what Marian had, diph'era. She'll have to be fumigated first." That night Ellen assured the child

that God would take care of Marian. "Is God in hell, too?" she asked. But Ellen looked unhappy and said, "You mustn't think such wicked thoughts." Well, of course it was all right if God really did take care of her.

The next day was the funeral. Their mother took the children into the darkened parlors to see Marian. It was a tremendous shock to the little girl. There lay Marian in her best white dress, with her short black hair parted across her forehead, her hands folded on her breast. She wore her little diamond ring. Her face was sweet and quiet. She was not changed at all. Ellen had told a lie. She wasn't different, not a wonderful being who had gone away because God had wanted her. This was what it was to be dead.

The child turned abruptly and ran upstairs, sobbing. She had never seen death before. And always this first impression comes back—with the sudden sweeping fear that death was obliteration and not a journey into a far country.

And she remembers, too, how Ellen came up to fetch her, washed her face, and

tried to comfort her with assurances of God's friendliness, and the reading of the fourteenth chapter of John and "The Peep of Day," until the storm of misery passed. So they went back to the parlor. The minister was there. He said the same kind of things that Ellen had said—only it took him longer to say them.

They were not true. The child knew that they were not. For she, with her own eyes, had seen Marian and she knew that death was the end of life. Ellen was wrong, the minister was wrong, the Bible was wrong.

And so agnosticism came on her in a flash. But Christmas restored a kind of mental order. There was a toy printing press, and Ernest started a newspaper. He let the child help him. They wrote stories and poems and the literary passion ran high. Ernest wrote a very thrilling story about a boy who ran away to sea and was shipwrecked. She wrote about beautiful little girls, as unlike herself as possible in appearance, but whose desires and attainments were spun out of the thread of her most intimate consciousness.

By and by the strangeness of Marian's absence passed. Even the acuteness of the bitter new knowledge faded. Some minute ganglion of cells with which we adjust even our unbeliefs to life had begun to function, but never again was she entirely unaware of their existence.

IV

"In my own shire, if I was sad,
Homely comforters I had."

THEIR GOING TO THE FARM FOR THANKSgiving was supposed to be a surprise for Ernest and the child, but somehow it had crept through the kitchen and upstairs. They heard it first on Monday when they were going to bed.

"You're going to the farm for Thanksgiving," Ellen said as she pulled the child's sailor blouse over her head.

"Don't believe it," remarked Ernest from the corner where he was struggling with his shoe laces. "We'd uv heard."

The child wasn't so sure about that, for in her unhappy experience most of the actions of the Olympian gods were surprises.

"You wait and see," chuckled Ellen, picking up the clothes from the heaps in which they lay and folding them on chairs ready for the next morning. After the door was closed and the room was filled with the mysterious half-light that a cold November moon throws across snow,

Ernest and his sister sat up in their beds and talked in loud whispers across the room about the chances of their going.

"Don't you hope it's true?" she breathed.

"Sure, it's true, true as . . . true. Father's there, and mother hasn't bought a turkey yet." Ernest's voice dwindled away in a list of the accessories of turkey which mother had not bought.

"We haven't been there for ages an' ages an' ages," she added in a sing-song. She liked sentences that could be sung, so she sang that one softly over and over.

Footsteps paused outside the door and their mother's voice came in, calm and crisp: "You children go right to sleep. No more talking."

They snuggled down into their caves, less from obedience than from a drowsy calm that had come over them. Something very pleasant was going to happen the next day.

"There'll be snow all over the pigpen," Ernest muttered from under the blankets, "an' we'll take the sled."

The next morning at breakfast their

mother said quite casually, as if it were not in the least an exciting thing, "We are all going to the farm this afternoon, to spend Thanksgiving."

Ernest stuck out his tongue at his sister under cover of his porridge bowl, and she stuck out hers at him quite openly. Her mother was busy giving Belle some directions and didn't see. After breakfast they held a council to decide on what they wanted to take with them. Then they collected the things—last year's sled, still quite new because it had been a warm winter, and Ernest's baseball bat and mitten in case the snow melted, and books and dolls and the toy printing press if it should rain. These they stacked by the trunk.

Then their mother came into the room. "What are you doing with all this truck, children?" she asked, brushing aside the neatly arranged piles and replacing them with woolen underclothes which took up quite as much room as they had.

"They're to take to the farm," Ernest explained, a look of doubt already clouding his face.

"Nonsense!" said mother, briskly. "Put

them away. We'll only be there a few days, and we can't carry along the whole house."

In went the woolen underwear, the kind that tickled your arms and made you feel so stuffy and uncomfortable in the house, but which was warm and friendly when you were out in the cold. Ernest and the child restored the treasures to their proper places, except the sled, which they took down to the barn driveway, which sloped, and spent the rest of the morning in melancholy coasting.

After a while Ernest hit on a plan. "I could carry it," he said, and little sister said, "I could help."

"It's no fun without a sled," he went on. "What'll we do if it rains? Oh, shoot it! I don't want to go to the farm if we can't have any fun. What 'u'd she have to take all those clothes for?"

They supposed that by the time the trunk was packed and lunch ready their mother would have forgotten that the sled had been discarded.

As the child was being bundled into an

extraordinary number of wraps Ernest appeared dragging "The Glide" after him.

"Hurry up, Ernest; don't keep everybody waiting," called mother who was bustling about, making sure that they had everything for the trip. Among other things, then, she stopped to inspect the children. Her glance included everything, but chiefly "The Glide." She took its rope out of Ernest's hand and pushed it into the hall closet. "It will be all right there until we come back," she said, firmly, helping to settle him into his reefer.

Later, on the train, when their mother had caught her breath and could notice the children other than as a part of the preparation, she asked: "What's the matter, dears? Aren't you glad to be going to the farm? We'll have a week there, with all this splendid snow. Think what a fine time you'll have!"

The dears gulped, and stared stonily out of the window for a while longer. But after all, they were going to the farm, and presently Ernest turned to the child with a look of great inspiration in his eyes.

"We can play spanking the pigs," he

whispered, looking furtively at his mother, reading the *Herald and Presbyter* in the seat across the aisle.

Between Galesburg and Toluca there were stretches of hilly country with deep ravines and frozen brooks, desolate stretches, the child thought them, with scarcely a house to break their barrenness. And there were the lowlands that began ten miles or so before they reached the river. They always tried to see who could catch the first sight of the river, a gray thread lying close among the marshes.

When the river was lost in its own swamps they knew that LaRose was just ahead, and after that Toluca, the little out-at-elbows mining town which was the station nearest the farm. On one side of the track was a deserted coal-chute and dump, and on the other a water-tank where the engine always drank, panting, before the train pulled into the station. Ernest and the child would get out here and run to the station to meet "Big Kirg," before father and mother did. Big John MacKirgan had come over from County Antrim with Martha, his wife, some thirty years

before, and ever since then he had lived on their grandfather's farm. He was the most delightful friend that ever a child had, all kindness and simplicity, with the belief of the Irish in the "little folk." "No," he would tell the child, "I never seen one sure, but me father seen 'em plenty. Aye, at Bushmills he did, peerin' roond the 'stillery wall in the gloamin'."

Big Kirg met them at the station. He had two of the plow horses and the road wagon. Their mother and the wraps and the bags were packed in the back, with the trunk strapped on behind. Both Ernest and the child wanted to sit in the front seat and help drive. They wanted to very much. They planted their feet firmly apart and stood their ground. It was a case for arbitration. Big Kirg unhitched the horses and came around the side of the wagon. All at once something strong caught the child around her bulgy waist and before she knew it she was sitting in the front seat and Big Kirg was climbing over her and tucking the big buffalo robe about her knees.

"Sister'll help me drive," he said to

Ernest in that confidential way they both liked so much. "You'll need to be savin' yourself to help me ride out to salt the cattle when we get home."

The farm was twelve miles distant, outside a snug little village called Magnolia. All the way the child held one of the lines with her hand, just behind where Big Kirg held it, slapping old gray Dock whenever Big Kirg said, "Now give 'em a bit o' talk."

There was a turn in the road two miles from the house from which they could see the chimneys. Then at another corner the barns and an edge of the house came into sight. Ernest usually jumped out here, with the child tagging at his heels, and ran ahead to look at the pigs before the wagon turned into the barnyard. To-day, of course, she was too busy, but Ernest jumped out and swung on the gate of the pigpen while she and Big Kirg steered the heavy wagon through the barnyard gate.

The snow was deep on the barn roof, and from the barnyard to the house there was a narrow path furrowed out between snowbanks. They caught sight of Mrs.

Kirg waving her red shawl at the other end of it, and they ran through the snowbanks to meet her. Shep and Mack, the two dogs, were jumping up and down on the kitchen porch, barking with an abandon of excitement.

"You childer come right in," Mrs. Kirg said, hugging them both, while Shep licked their faces and little black-and-tan Mack tried to swallow their fingers, which was as far as he could reach. "I'll wait for your ma." They tumbled into the kitchen, where the young MacAllisters, the MacKirgan grandchildren, were scuffling about the door.

The children were very fond of the young MacAllisters. Sheila, the oldest, was beginning to be grown up. Since they had seen her the spring before she had wound her black braids around the top of her head, and she stayed about the house more. She called them "you children," and told them to "run and play." Then there was Michael, black-haired and blue-eyed, with all the virtues and most of the faults of his grandfather McGinnis who was "the most deevilish man in the whole

county." Martha was nine—a straight, thin little girl whose ambition it was to teach school in Lostant, and who always tried to turn games into "school." The twins, Martin and Mary, were very useful for games that needed the background of an audience, for they were intensely appreciative. Young Dan was just learning to wobble about—he had been the baby the year before—and the children were scarcely inside the house when Martha pointed to a clothes hamper sitting beside the stove, and announced: "We've got a new baby in there. His name's Patrick. He's pretty red."

They inspected the red Patrick eagerly. Sheila lifted him up in her arms and pointed out his undeniable charms. She let them look at his feet with the toes curled back under them; they peered inside his red and empty mouth and finally as a special treat were allowed to feel, very gently, the soft spot on top of his head.

Then Michael and Ernest went off to the woodshed to look at Michael's coon, which lived in a wire pen.

That night when the table was cleared and the dishes washed and put away they sat around the stove in the kitchen. It had begun to snow again and there was a mist of falling white outside the window. Inside there was a quiet warmth, centered about the big black stove, its top glowing a dull red. Big Kirg and the children's father sat smoking in rocking-chairs, Mrs. Kirg and their mother sewing; the children drowsy and warm like little animals, drawing closer and closer together within the radius of heat sent out by the stove. By and by the baby began to fret and Mrs. Kirg leaned over it, crooning a song whose words clung to the child's memory only as vague and elusive fragments:

"Father, mother, sister, brother
Never spoken to one another

. . . . . .

The little baby in the cradle
Smothered itsel' with a silver ladle

. . . . . .

Oh, my little mule and I, my little mule and I
We'll come along after,
My little mule. . . ."

Later they climbed the stairs, their

mother leading the way with the lamp, and their father bringing up the rear with the flatirons, all hot and wrapped in newspapers. Ernest slept in a room at the end of the hall, and the child had a little bed in her mother's room. She loved her mother's room at the farm. It had windows on two sides and looked out into the meadow and the grove. To-night the windows were all frosted over, and every now and then she could hear the snow sliding on the roof. In the attic directly overhead there were scamperings and slidings as the mice and chipmunks scurried about among the piles of old newspapers and the bunches of dried sweet-smelling herbs.

The pictures in her mother's room always interested the child intensely, especially two lithographs, one representing a beautiful and very anæmic maiden with long fair braids and a modest high-necked and long-sleeved nightgown, supported in the arms of her aged mother, by an open casement window. A canary hung in a cage over her head, and a vine grew over the window edge. The other showed the same beautiful girl lying still and dead,

with flowers in her hands and a wreath about her hair. The aged mother stands at the window and sets the canary free. These pictures hung at the foot of the child's bed, one on each side of the window. She adored them. She would imagine herself the lovely maiden, though, to her secret grief, her hair would not lie about her shoulders. She would act out the scenes of her death, raising herself on one elbow and pointing with a vigorous and healthy thumb out of the window; then she would sink back with a rattling sigh and fold her hands across her breast. After that she would be the minister, whose sermon would rehearse her virtues to the bereaved family.

Another picture that she liked was the engraving of the Treasury Building in Washington, sent to her mother by a distant cousin. The distant cousin had been a clerk there and had marked the window of his "office" with a black cross. Once, in a boastful moment, she told Martha that Cousin George "owned" that building, but Martha, refusing to be misled by any patent inaccuracies, had referred the question

to her mother, and the child had her mouth washed out with soapsuds for lying. After that she lost all interest in Cousin George —he ceased to exist as a wonderful unknown person, ruling a palace of light. He became, instead, a clerk.

It was, you see, a pleasant place for a little girl to go to sleep.

Waking up was not such a leisurely process. There were all the early-morning noises of chickens, and the rattling of milk-pails, and the dry crunch of the snow as the men started down to the barnyard. Michael helped the men milk, and this morning Ernest went out with him. He was gone when the child woke up. The room was very cold and she stretched out a timid arm for her stockings, huddled down in her shoes. Then she made a little hut out of the blankets and finished dressing. But her mother did not share her enthusiasm for the coziness of dressing in bed; she attacked the fundamental principles of getting up.

"You haven't washed! Aren't you

ashamed of yourself? Get right up and do it immediately!"

The child wasn't ashamed of herself, but she jumped up and hurried over to the washstand that stood on a chilly square of oilcloth. The water in the tall white pitcher was almost frozen, and had thick squashy pieces of ice—the kind that you can't skate on—floating around in it. With her mother standing over her to see that she didn't slight her ears, she splashed the water noisily about until almost all of the contents was disposed of to maternal satisfaction.

By the time she was dressed according to the precepts of her mother's own childhood, she was so bulgy with clothes, under and outer, that she moved like a great ship full-rigged. She hated many clothes—they hampered life so completely.

After breakfast Ernest and Michael, little Martha and the child, went to the barn. They had laid plans the night before for a Bacchanalian morning spanking the pigs. This had to be done with great caution and secrecy, for being spanked had a way of

upsetting the nervous systems of the pigs and of making Big Kirg very angry.

None of the children knew who had invented the game. As a matter of fact, it had probably grown slowly on other relics of barbarism upon which their well-ordered lives were built. The pigs had delightful quarters behind the barn. There was a shed with a little door large enough for one pig leading from the shed to the pig yard. All around it went a trough, just high enough for a pig to reach comfortably when he wanted to eat or to scratch his back. In the summer the pig yard was filled with warm, moist, squdsy mud, in which they wallowed and thought the solemn thoughts of pigs. But in winter they stayed in the pen except at meal-times. Little pleasure that was to the children! Then they discovered that by lying on their stomachs on the roof of the shed they could see into it when the door was open.

The genius among them whose creative imagination joined these isolated and tempting facts remains obscure. Perhaps

that is the reason that all four of them were punished.

Martha and the child crawled to the roof of the shed, each armed with a board. Then Ernest and Michael went inside and disturbed the pigs. A dissatisfied and rather astonished grunting, varied with annoyed squeaks, came forth. Then sharper squeals and the sound of heavy bodies bumping against the sides of the shed. The little girls hung over the door, clutching their weapons. The first pig came, and Martha's board fell with a whack on its back. It snorted with surprise, and trotted off to the other side of the pen, where it immediately became engrossed in some unnoticed breakfast. Now it was the child's turn.

"Here he comes!" shouted Michael as a pig shot through the door. She swung her board and it landed out in the middle of the yard, while the pig squealed with malicious relief.

Inside she could hear disgusted remarks from Ernest and Michael. Then a minute

later Ernest's head appeared over the top of the shed.

"You go down and chase'm out," he said, generously dismissing his sister. When she got inside the shed she found Michael riding around on a particularly large pig, which was reeling back and forth drunkenly. The other pigs were in a panic of fear. The unknown terror without was nothing compared with the little demon who rode in their midst.

Michael's steed turned through the door, knocking Michael off—luckily for Michael, for Ernest placed a particularly neat spank on his back.

Then vengeance fell. Big Kirg heard the noise and came stalking among them. He lifted Michael and Ernest by their waistbands and shook them till they squealed not unlike the pigs. Martha and the child waited their turns, not daring to desert, for fear that the boys would not let them play with them if they did. Big Kirg sputtered and called them all young rascalpeens and threatened them with "ha'nts" of the pigs they might have frightened into an untimely death. He

threatened, too, a more immediate disaster when the news was told at the house.

Abashed and penitent, they huddled there in the shed. Then there came a timid and inquiring "shoof" at the door and the largest pig peered in, his nose uptilted in a jaunty, confident way.

"They ain't hurted," puffed Michael as he straightened his disheveled belt line.

"Hurted!" snorted Big Kirg. "They'll all be havin' palpitation of the heart t'once. Cut along to the house now. Youse'll get what's coming to you."

They did, with a beautiful impartiality. After they had atoned they went out of doors again, a little lamely at first.

By and by their spirits came back and they went to the barn. It was abandoned, except for the carriage horses. They made a burrow in the hay. For a while they lay there talking. Unconsciously they talked in whispers, the quiet of the great barn casting over them that delicious sense of Something Present.

"A man hung himself in a barn onct, on a rafter, with a rope." This was Michael's

thought. "They found him there, and cut him down."

They drew closer together. Ernest suddenly pointed to a beam that went above the haymow. "Lookey," he said. There hung a rope, its frayed ends swinging slowly in the draught that came through the little dormer windows.

They held their breaths as long as they could, busy with their thoughts. Then Michael spoke:

"Gran'father went to a hanging onct at Portrush. He got a bit of rope, he did, an' he's going to give it to me when he dies. It's luck to have a bit o' hangman's rope. You'll never be hung yourself."

"Cricky!" said Ernest, sitting up straight. "Mebbe some one was hung here in this barn. We'll all get a piece of the rope, an' we'll have a club, an' that'll be our badge."

The idea was immensely appealing. The children made an elaborate division of labor. Michael's part was to crawl on his stomach out on the beam and hack off pieces of the rope with Big Kirg's sheep shears.

Ernest was to catch and distribute them and the little girls were to make up a "constitution." They agreed to wear the piece of rope, sleeping and waking. In the summer the child had gone to a wedding and the ironclad oath had struck her fancy, though she had never had a chance to use it until now. "Till death us do part" seemed to her a phrase of sinister and romantic possibilities. Martha, too, thought it was splendid.

Michael reached the dangling rope safely and cut off four ragged bits of rope. Then he slid along the beam overhead, peering into the unknown corners of the barn which the others, on the hay, could only imagine. At the end of the beam, where it met some heavy bracings, Michael stopped and then gave a little shout: " 'S a pigeon's nest here; 's got eggs in it." He felt them. "They ain't very warm. Ol' mother pigeon ottent to leave'm when it's cold."

The children could see the transfer of an egg from nest to pocket, and then Michael slid unconcernedly down to the hay.

"You can have it," he said, handing it over to the child.

It was cold, and she cuddled it in her hand until it began to get warm.

"Mebbe it'll hatch," suggested Martha.

This new thought had wonderful attractiveness.

It was a more comfortable thought than the "club," which did bring some horrid possibilities into the horizon. When the spell of a swaying rope was so potent on a bright morning, what might it not be in the dark of the night, with mice and chipmunks rustling the dried herbs overhead? What a nice pet a pigeon would be—so placid, and always making such a pleasant gargling noise in its throat! Perhaps it would learn to take sugar out of her mouth, like "Grace's Pet Canary." Grace was a godly little girl who had her being in a Sunday-school book. . . .

"Now we've got to swear"—Ernest's voice broke into the quiet of the child's thoughts—"never to di-vulge the name or the purpose of this club, an' to wear the secret symbol inside our shirts."

They swore, each after his own interpre-

tation of the word—Michael with a refreshing novelty, a combination of phrases which were new to the child and apparently a little new to Ernest—the little girl with a lady-like, "Golly-golly-hope-to-die."

Then, all bulging where the secret symbol lay, they went into the bright glare of the sunlight. Still warming the egg, the child hurried to the house.

She met Big Kirg stamping the snow off his feet on the kitchen steps. "Big Kirg," she asked, "how do pigeon's eggs hatch?"

"Shure," he said, "you put it in a nest and sit on it if you're a bird. Bein' as you're not, you better set it way back on top of the stove where it's warm like."

She did. An old strawberry box filled with cotton and pieces of cloth from Mrs. Kirg's rag bag, made a nest and the egg lay inside it. She made anxious inquiries about the length of time it would take the egg to hatch. Everyone seemed doubtful, except Big Kirg, who had a breezy confidence that it would be hatched by morning. The last thing before bedtime she lifted the cotton from the egg and held it

close to her ear to catch the faint tapping of the little pigeon.

All that night she dreamed fitfully, first of a rope which hung over her head and came closer and closer, till it was ready to slip around her neck, and then suddenly she would find herself rolling down a hill of hay—an endless hill—and just out of her reach dangled the rope, tempting and elusive. All at once she would find herself looking into the strawberry box. It was empty. But there, on the floor beside the stove, was the cat, crunching something, her mouth all fringed with downy feathers.

Morning came at last, with the immense relief of knowing it had been a dream. She could hardly wait to get downstairs. Big Kirg was standing by the stove, rubbing his hands.

"Well, have you seen your pigeon yet this morning?" he asked, casually.

"Not yet," she said, making for the nest.

There—it was almost beyond belief—was her pigeon, just as she had imagined it, gray and fluffy, almost portly (as a pigeon should be), making soft sounds in its throat. Athena had not sprung full armed

from the head of Zeus more carefully equipped for life than this. She started to pick it up and it fluttered rather awkwardly. It looked at her with bright, anxious eyes. She cooed at it as reassuringly as she could, and touched its head gently. Did it have a soft spot like the MacAllister baby?

Big Kirg and Mrs. Kirg stood by, watching.

"It's a great bird that," remarked Big Kirg. "It only hatched last night an' with all them feathers already. You'll have to be tying a string around his leg, so, till he gets used to bein' hatched in a house instid of a barn."

He passed a piece of darning cotton around the pigeon's leg and gave the loose end to the child.

"There ye are."

Somehow, it was to Big Kirg that she felt she must tell her joy. She trotted down to the barn with him after breakfast, holding on to his knotty hand. "Big Kirg," she asked, "did the little people put it there? Do you think it's a changeling?"

He pursed up his lips. "Well, I'd not be

sayin' that. I ain't never seen no little people mysel', but my gran'father he did, back in Bushmills. . . ."

She loved that story of Big Kirg's grandfather. Both Ernest and she knew it by heart.

By and by she went back to the house, to give the pigeon some cornmeal. Big Kirg hadn't said so, but she knew he *thought* the little people had brought it there in the night, through the white light of the moon.

The week passed. Thanksgiving Day came and went with the feast and the unaccustomed sight of Big Kirg and the hired men in their Sunday clothes. There was a strange quiet about everything—a sleepy hush on the part of the grown-ups, who read, each according to the yearnings of his soul, the *Farm and Fireside*, *The Stock Breeders' Gazette* or the *Christian Work and Evangelist.*

In the afternoon the children gathered around Pete, one of the hired men, as he started off, looking very impressive but miserable in a stiff collar and "store suit." He had a patent-leather buggy with bright

red wheels, and Sheila told the children that Minnie Murphy, at the next farm, rode out with him—"a red-headed thing she was, an' no mistake!"

The dark came early and Big Kirg went out to milk. The circle began to close around the stove. Years afterward the child remembered sitting on the floor with her head in her mother's lap, the pigeon sleeping in its nest, right where she could touch its soft feathers. After that things begin to fade out faintly, but back through all the time between then and now she could hear a kind voice singing softly:

"The little baby in the cradle
Smothered itsel' with a silver ladle.

My little mule and I
We'll come along after,
My little mule and I. . . ."

V

"It was not in the winter
Our loving lot was cast.
It was the time of roses;
We plucked them as we passed!"

After Marian died Ernest and his little sister played together more than they had done before. One spring they had a store under the porch of the house where the sand pile was. Neither of them liked the sand pile and they were supposed to play there because their grandmother had given it to them. Ernest thought pies were stupid, and the child agreed. She would have thought anything for the privilege of playing with him. Besides, she was a bit afraid of playing there on account of the Kobold. The Kobold was a joint creation of Ellen and the Grimms. He had in the process turned out to be a little more Lutheran and a little less brownie, and he had a horrid way of turning into a "little bird" who told one's mother the things that one did.

A store is an absorbing thing to have

under one's porch. Ernest discovered that by rubbing the pillars of the house which extended down to the ground he could collect a vast amount of beautifully polished sandstone, and that by mixing brick dust with it he could produce a mysterious-looking powder. They bottled the mixtures, and the stone-rubbing industry prospered for a time until the pillars began to look very hollow in spots and the Kobold "told." At least then mother made a tour of inspection and took away all their equipment. This was very embarrassing just then, for they had contracted with several little boys of their acquaintance for a number of bottles of dynamite. But after all, as Ellen said, they might have rubbed the house down!

Shortly after that the cemetery was started. David was the first corpse. In fact, if it hadn't been for David there probably wouldn't have been any cemetery. He was the child's canary, who lived for two twittering years and then died in the quiet way of little inarticulate things. Ellen suggested a funeral—Ellen was always ready with concrete comfort! So

he was buried in the flower bed, just where the pansies stopped and the geraniums began. Mother was away for the day and Ellen found a mourning veil of grandmother's, treasured because it had been worn at grandfather's funeral, and the child draped herself in it.

There were hymns, with the cook and Ward, the hired man, to give volume to the sound, and Ellen read the fourteenth chapter of John, and the child cried a great deal and wondered if there would be nice cages and bird bath tubs in the house of many mansions.

After David had been buried and a brick moved from an inconspicuous place in the barn driveway for a headstone, great zest for funerals sprang up in the child, and she decided to make a cemetery. The town cemetery was called "Hope," so after some consultation with Ellen and Belle she called this one "Charity." The name seemed beautifully symbolic of the way in which she should bury the unidentified dead—the birds and cats and rabbits which one found at intervals. She got ready a number of neat cast-off candy boxes, and

attractive little bricks and pieces of building stone, and waited for something to happen. But life seemed to be very strong among birds and cats and rabbits, and deaths simply did not happen, near the child's house, at least.

Then one day she was playing with Jane Briggs across the street. Jane had goldfish, and one of them was dying. She would swim languidly around the globe, and then float wearily to the top on her side, to stay until an energetic friend jostled her down again.

Just as soon as Jane showed the dying Goldie to the child she was offered a family lot and a funeral thrown in—with an eye to the possible deaths of Tiny and Shiny. The two little girls sat by the fish bowl all the afternoon, talking in whispers. At last Goldie came to the top and lay for a long time without stirring. Shiny knocked her repeatedly with his tail. Goldie lay still. They were sure she was dead, so they scooped her out with a little net and laid her in a sunny place on the window sill to dry while they ran over to the cemetery to get ready. They couldn't

quite decide whom to ask for the funeral. The child thought it would be nice to have a real minister, though that did seem rather disloyal to Ellen after her efforts on behalf of David. A great many of Jane's relatives had died and her mother had any number of veils and bonnets, which would make a very impressive funeral. It was hard to decide on the guests because Jane and the child were not "mad" at the same people. They discussed this on the way back to Jane's house. Of course they would have to ask their families and their cooks, and Jane thought that Mrs. Dobbs, who lived next to her, would like to come.

Goldie in the meantime had flopped over on her side in her last sleep, and had fallen down in the path, where Billy, the cat, was dozing warily. At first, when the mourners came back and discovered Billy licking his chops with a complacent smirk, they were horribly disappointed. Then they gathered up a piece of Goldie's tail and a few scales which they could scrape off Billy's mouth.

"We might," Jane suggested, "bury

these. Nobody would know that it wasn't all of Goldie."

"Of course not," the child agreed.

Jane's brother George gave them some leeks from his garden to plant on the grave.

There was another episode connected with "Charity" cemetery. The child was always ashamed of it.

Of course it was interesting, in a way, to keep Goldie's and David's graves nicely smooth and covered with flowers, and she had built a fence of burnt matches round the place, and had one grave already dug for an emergency case. But nothing died.

Then one day she went into the barn to get a trowel. Right in the middle of the floor there sat a bird. It wasn't a very young bird and it didn't seem to be hurt. It just sat there and watched her with very bright, unblinking eyes. She walked around it and shook her skirt at it with an explosive "shoo," but it never moved. All that day it stayed there. She took some cornmeal and a little dish of water and pushed them right up to it with a long

stick, being a bit afraid. The next morning (it was Sunday) she could hardly wait to get out to the barn. The barn was used for only carriages and tools, and the horse lived down at the town livery stable.

The bird was still sitting there, its head drooping a little, and a bright, furtive look in its eyes. All during the long church she thought about the robin. An insidious thought came to her while the minister was praying. Somewhere she had heard that salt killed birds; salt on their tails caught them, but if they ate it they died. It was a horrid thought, but so very fascinating.

Perhaps the bird was suffering and it would be better to kill it. That afternoon, when the Sunday-afternoon quiet had settled down on the house and the cook and Ellen were both "out," the child went into the kitchen and got a cupful of salt. She took it out to the barn where the robin was still drooping, a few inches away from his first place. His eyes were almost shut and she thought he was asleep. She pushed the cup of salt along the floor with a stick, and then spilled most of it in front of him.

A sudden sick feeling caught her then and in a sort of delirium of fear she ran out into the yard. She was afraid and very unhappy. She was afraid most of all of the barn. She was a murderess. She lay on her stomach on the grass and shivered. Later on her mother called to her to go down to the cemetery with Ernest to put some flowers on Marian's grave, and she went with a kind of melancholy relief. Coming home, Ernest shot hickey-dums at sparrows on the Presbyterian church roof, and the child, seized with an unreasoning feeling of dread, ran home ahead of him, sobbing. Her mother having tried vainly to find out why she was crying, put her to bed and was very kind and gentle. She brought the child's bread and milk upstairs and the bread was cut up into pleasant little cubes which were much nicer to eat than whole slices. "She wears herself all out playing," the child heard her mother say to father.

At noon the next day the child cut a wide circle around the barn. The door was open and Ward, the hired man, was sweeping the floor. He saw her, and called

out, "Lookey here what I've got for your cemetery!" He held up something in his hand; but the little girl put her arm across her eyes and ran into the house. It was a long time before she went into the barn again. That evening she heard Ward saying to Ellen on the back porch:

"That little fly-away don't stick to anything. Tired of her cemetery already. She didn't even look at that dead bird I found for her."

VI

"That is the land of lost content;
I see it shining plain—
The happy highways where I went
And cannot come again."

In one year all of the child's pleasantest little beliefs came tumbling about her ears. God, the All-powerful; Santa Claus; babies in baskets under currant bushes.

She had doubted before. She knew all about babies, and to make sure, she had looked every morning under the currant bush which grew at the end of the delphinium bed. Not only that, but she prayed to God the All-powerful please to put a baby sister with curly hair there, in a round basket, suitable for picnics. Then one day, at recess, she heard that Mrs. Evans was going to have a baby. She told Ellen, who shook her head and clucked with her tongue and said, "You mustn't say things like that to your mamma." That puzzled the child, but, after all, her mother often made mistakes. Mother said, "God's eye is

always on you"; but, though the child examined herself minutely in the bathtub, she found no eye except her own; Ellen had not denied the truth of Mrs. Evans's baby, so it must be that mother did not know. The child joined the conspiracy to keep her in ignorance.

So when shortly afterward there was a great to-do on Prairie Street over the Evans baby she pretended to be surprised and asked all sorts of questions about where the doctor had found it and how he had decided to give it to Mrs. Evans instead of to Ellen, who loved babies.

Santa Claus was different. It was expedient to believe in Santa Claus. Ernest had gained quite a lot of enviable notoriety by his belief in him. A little boy across the street—mother always spoke of him as a "tough little boy"—announced one day that Santa Claus was "just your father and mother." Ernest had hit him and a fight followed. The tough little boy dragged Ernest around the house by the heels, like Hector seven times around the walls of Troy. He and Ernest were the most intimate of enemies, and Ernest had

not had such a good excuse for an attack for weeks.

After Ernest had been called before the family tribunal—for he wasn't supposed to fight—he confessed, with his sister as a willing witness, that the tough little boy had denied Santa Claus,—and with gulps and hiccoughs he gave his mother to understand that he was no Peter to sit by the fire warming himself. And his mother made much of him, while his little sister shone in the reflected light. Then by and by his mother slipped on her coat and hat and ran over to Mr. Bartlett's house—Mr. Bartlett owned the *Galesburg Mail*, and told him the story. He welcomed copy with such great heart interest. A few days later Ernest's picture was in the paper, and below it was a touching account of how this brave little boy had fought for Santa Claus. It closed with an appeal for like beliefs on the part of grown-ups.

The tough little boy was standing by the pump in the schoolyard the next morning. He grinned broadly and spat through the hole left by two absent teeth. Then he and Ernest began making plans for a snow

circus in the barn. "I'm goin' to get a coaster f'r Christmas," Ernest confided. "I saw it in the Yellow Room behind the bed."

"From Santy Claus?" squealed the tough little boy, derisively.

And Ernest swaggered just a little bit. "Hm! There isn't any Santy Claus. He's just your mother and father," he said, emphatically.

The Yellow Room was the holy of holies of Christmas time. It was at the end of the hall upstairs and no one ever slept in it. In the closet hung mother's best dresses, swathed in tissue paper and heavy with the scent of camphor balls. The bureau was a mysterious and delightful place. Mother kept Christmas presents of other years in it. Whenever the children had too many toys, or things that were "too old" for them, they were put away in the bureau drawer. Once there, they were lost for another twelve months. About Thanksgiving time the Yellow Room would open its door to receive strange and bulky packages. If one stood outside with one's ear flat against the door

one heard paper rattling, and drawers being opened and closed. The door was almost always locked now, and it was very hard to see anything through the transom.

They wrote letters to Santa Claus. Once the child had a discussion with Ernest over the advisability of putting their letters in the post-box. This seemed to be taking an unnecessary risk of their going astray. So they usually responded glibly to their father's offer to mail them as he went downtown. This seemed much the simplest solution for the matter. From the time that the letters went off until Christmas morning they lived in a fever of excitement. There was a greater element of certainty in telling their mother and father what they wanted than there was in telling a benign and plutocratic saint who had a vast toy shop at the North Pole and drove a dozen reindeer scuttling over roofs.

Christmas eve they hung up their stockings. The child usually borrowed a pair of Ellen's stockings because they were longer and stronger. There was a little ridge in the yellow maple woodwork above the fireplace where the pins went.

Year after year they used the same holes—Ernest's on the right, the child's on the left, and Marian's growing dim from disuse in between. They always waited until they were undressed before they hung up their stockings. Then mother and father and Ellen and the cook would come out to watch them do it.

"It's a pretty cold night for Santa Claus to be out," father would say, rubbing his hands together.

"He'll have a lot of fur robes in the sleigh, though," Ernest would answer, humoring him.

It was hard for the children to be exactly clear in their own minds about what their father and mother thought. They seemed so sure about things—those reindeer, for instance. Sometimes the thought touched lightly on the child's mind that they didn't really know—and yet it was they who filled the stockings!

Once mother had suggested that the children leave a little note for Santa Claus, thanking him for their things. "But we won't have seen them. How can we say we like them?" Ernest insisted.

His mother's answer was irrefutable: "Doesn't he always bring you what you want? Well, why can't you thank him for what you asked for?"

Later Ernest whispered to the child: "I'm going to get that building set. Mother just the same as said so!"

But even from their superior heights of knowledge the children felt some nervous doubts. Perhaps they hadn't understood that it was a blond boy-doll, not a brunette girl-doll, that the child wanted. She must have a boy-doll to have the wedding for which Marjorie and she had laid such elaborate plans. And maybe they didn't remember that Ernest had asked for a switch-and-signal station for his railroad. They had been known to make some mistakes.

The longest night in all the year was that night before Christmas. The children tried to go right to sleep. At the same time they listened for sounds of Santa Claus through the door. They tried to decide whether their mother and father would fill their stockings that night or early the next morning. They grew very

thirsty and called to Ellen for drinks. They tried to see through the tiny crack left by the door into the hall, but the light was bright and blinded them.

"Has he come yet?" they would ask, and Ellen would shake her head.

"Ssh! He won't come if you are awake. But I think I hear the sleigh on the roof."

Even Ellen was deceived. Sometimes they almost doubted their own knowledge.

And then dreams persisted in coming; terrible, ominous dreams, variations on a melancholy theme. Invariably the child woke to find even her stocking gone, the wide hall where the fireplace was, empty and echoing. Sometimes there would be presents, piled in their accustomed order, but, as she lifted them, one by one, they crumbled and fell away. Then would come sleepy moments of relief between dreams, when a dull realization of their unreality dispelled the clouds of apprehension.

Morning came—at last. A very early morning, with a smoky haze still loitering about the roofs. They dressed by gaslight. Their mother had a rule that pres-

ents could not be opened in nightgowns—some silly reason about colds, and besides it added a little to the glamour to have the whole domestic group gathered about the fireplace during the disemboweling of the stockings.

The children had no illusions about how the things had come there (there hadn't been a sleigh on the roof), but the joy and relief came when they had them actually in their arms, solid, real, desired. Was it not a part of the hoax in which they had joined to outwit the credulous ones, who made a solemn circle about them—the illuminati!

And so the little hothouse of illusion in which so much of their childhood was spent was abandoned, and after a while even the occasional airing of the images was given up.

The winter the child was seven she was a ruthless iconoclast. The ways of nature, of institutions, of deities of various kinds were a part of the luminous crystal into which she gazed. She felt very sorry for her mother. She felt a little less sorry for her father because he didn't show quite the

respect and awe for God that her mother did. For Ernest she had an admiration which was boundless. He, like herself, understood the abysmal depths of mature minds.

Her great defiance of the idols came, however, as a direct result of the worship of one of them. It was Sunday, late in March, too raw and cold for her to go walking with her father and Ernest, so she stayed at home while her mother read aloud from the Sunday-school magazine.

She read an uplifting account of how the Gospel came to a tribe of African aborigines. It was a wonderful story full of miracles and unquestioning piety. After a brief prayer by the noble boy missionary, the heathen fell on their knees and insisted on making a bonfire out of their favorite trinkets and concubines (her mother supplied "wives" when she read it aloud).

The talk then drifted away but the child's mind was busy with the spectacular bonfire. It was an alluring thought and all that evening it kept recurring. She knew in her deepest heart that the idea of offering up the relics of childish things had

been sent to her to be used, not to be stored away in the reflective background of her mind. For the next two or three days she played with plans. Of course her mother and Ellen must not know. They had very prim and fixed ideas about wastefulness. She knew that they would not look with enthusiasm upon the burning up of the idols. There was also to be considered the question of what to sacrifice. Undoubtedly the dolls should go. Perhaps she might save Ethel, the rag doll who had been Marian's. To burn Ethel was hardly within her jurisdiction. But Grace and Fanny and Winnie should be given up, together with their best dresses and Grace's trunk that mother had brought from Marshall Field's. Dolls were the nearest things to concubines that the child could think of. And she must offer up her little blue locket. Uncle James had given it to her several years before and had told her that it was enchanted and that it would bring her good luck. She adored it. At night she would climb out of bed and slip over to the table where it lay (her mother wouldn't let her wear it in bed) and carry

it back with her. Then she would fall asleep, cuddling it in her hand, her cheek resting on its smooth bright blueness. But while the passion for renunciation mounted she grew reckless, and thoughtless of the long days after the conflagration. She thought of the Bible that Dr. Parker had given her when she was promoted in Sunday school. Of course that should go. The paper would burn nicely.

She decided to have her fire out in the empty lot behind the barn. Not even Ernest should know about it beforehand, for even Ernest had bursts of confidence with mother when she was hearing his prayers. She would not trust the secret with Ernest.

The appointed day came. She carried the doomed idols back to the altar. The altar was an oven-like structure made of bricks from the kitchen walk. She arranged Grace and Fanny and Winnie so that they would be comfortable even though they were being burned. On top of them she laid Grace's dresses, carefully weighted down by the Holy Scriptures, and on the very top, bright and blue and

beautiful in its pink cotton bed, lay the locket—the Isaac of the sacrifice.

When everything was ready she sat down and looked at the altar. But the feelings of exaltation of the African aborigines did not fall upon her. Perhaps she should dance. The Sunday-school paper had described their ecstatic dancing. She made a few solemn circuits of the altar and then struck a match. It puffed and went out. She struck another—it flickered for a minute and then died. The next one burned. She touched it to the fly leaf of the Bible. A quick little flame licked it up, and spread to the rest. In a few minutes the Bible was a mass of curling flames. The locket disappeared into the bright pit. The dresses caught then, and Fanny's hair. Winnie had a china head and a kid body, so she burned slowly and smelled very bad. A few minutes passed while she watched, half in fascination, half in remorse. Then the mass settled, and in the embers she saw her locket blackened and ugly.

For an instant her heart broke. She, like the heathen, had destroyed forever her old idols. But they were dear, comfort-

able things, and she had loved them. Now with the putting away of childish things she had gone into that cold unknowing world where Parents and Callers lived. Still, they had their odd mistaken notions about God and Santa Claus, and babies that sat in baskets under currant bushes, while the child had nothing, not even the enchanted locket, for her solace. That night she slept with her cheek on an empty curled-up hand. The next morning on her way to school she stopped to weep among the ashes. There, black and bent, lay the locket. She lifted it tenderly and tucked it away in her pocket. Its charm was gone. It had not been really enchanted; if it had been,

> "Fire could not burn
> Nor water drench."

An idol does not have a ghost, no little shadowy secondary self which tends its memory. The enchanted locket did not even leave a memory of potency.

The child had put away her childish things. She was a very lonely little girl.

VII

" . . . a tale which holdeth children from play
And old men from the chimney corner."

THE LIBRARY WAS A HIGH, RATHER dimly lighted room, with bookshelves running all the way around it from the floor to the ceiling. There was a little stepladder on wheels which looked like the one in Bunker's Shoe Store and made a very jolly though rather precarious means of locomotion.

The library was set apart from the other rooms downstairs and no one saw any reason why the child shouldn't play there. In the parlors—front and back—there were always things with corners to be knocked off, and little vases which fell off their perches on the slightest provocation. The library had no corners. Neither did it have bric-à-brac. But it had a compelling charm.

All of her own books were kept in the nursery on low shelves within easy reach. One reached them most easily by sitting

down on the floor and crawling from the Elsie books to the G. A. Hentys. The nursery library was frankly juvenile. At the same time it was a prim, late-Victorian youth, *Elsie Dinsmore* rubbed envious elbows with the "Pansy" books and some of the anæmic little Sunday-school pamphlets of her mother's childhood. Ernest's books, the Hentys and the "Young Colonials" series, infused a certain virility to the "Rollo" series, which belonged to the children jointly. They had a vast collection of illustrated books. They liked the ones with black-and-white pictures best, because they could color those. Acute rivalry existed between them as to staying within the lines. Ernest could always make much more impressive combinations of color in his books, but it cannot be denied that he had difficulties with edges.

The books in the library were of a different order. They stood in solemn rows behind glass doors. They scorned the lure of the eye. They bore no gilded roses on their backs. But they beckoned; they tempted, they cajoled.

The child sat pensively on the sliding

ladder. She was through with the age of chivalry. For more than a week she had ridden on a caravan, a home-coming crusader. She had crossed the deserts of Arabia, the sea, the Apennines. Now she was at home, snug in her castle, and quite bored. What did the knights do when they got home? It was, in fact, the end of a journey, the end of a phase. She realized that it had all been a game of making up, and now the desire to pretend left her. The drowsiness of the early spring afternoon crept into the room. She sat on the ladder, her mind blank, her body inert.

After all, pretending wasn't much fun. You knew all along that it wasn't true. At least it wasn't true *now*, and you had no reason to believe that it had been true *then*. Even the most vivid and entrancing of the imagined things began to grow dim, and their edges to blur off. Yet she was still half conscious of her quiet castle. The stepladder made a very pleasant turret on which to sit and muse on the failure of Romance.

She mused for a few minutes and shoved the ladder into another position. It

stopped before some books bound in dark red. She looked at them as a part of the surrounding country. Then her eye rested on *The Count of Monte Cristo*. She had not dreamed that the books in the library sheltered Counts among their number. Cautiously she shoved back the glass door and drew out the volume. She turned the pages and looked at the pictures. Then she looked for the parts which the pictures illustrated. It was quite a simple book and very easy to understand. Of course, there were words now and then that she didn't know, but she was not conscious of not knowing them, because they were part of the story—and that was clear as day. She forgot all about being a bored crusader and forgot that she was to go over to Miss Jane's at five o'clock to have her new dress tried on. Then she was creeping down the passageway that led to the mysterious subterranean chamber.

If the guardian gods of the nursery library had played their parts to the end, her mother would have discovered that she was not "playing" as a good child should. She would have seen the secret

treasure, replaced it on the shelf, and put the library under the ban. There was always something under the ban. But this particular afternoon nothing did happen. When it was time for tea she wriggled down off the library stepladder and carefully concealed the *Count* in her sailor blouse. Probably Peter Thomson never dreamed what little girls could use his blouses for. And yet somewhere in his mind he must have had an idea about their possibilities as storehouses—kind, expansive storehouses ready to receive the booty stolen from romance.

With *The Count of Monte Cristo* well hidden, the child went in to supper. Her mother and father talked as they always did. Life, apparently, had not suddenly become full of color and adventure for them. They went on, her father to tell about the people who had been in his office, and her mother about the meeting of the Ladies' Aid Society which had been held at Mrs. Webster's. Every now and then her father would lift the cover off the dish which contained the creamed codfish and put a spoonful on the child's plate. He

would inquire kindly what she had been doing to-day—always that same question, as though she did not pass her days in things vastly more important than *doing*. She passed her hand gently over *The Count of Monte Cristo* and said, "May I be excused?"

Her mother and father had some secret to discuss and they were quite willing that she should be excused. If she had not been excused they would have been driven to spelling out the words or using long ones, whose meaning had to be puzzled over before she could understand what they were talking about. There was a golden hour before she had to go to bed and she hurried to the nursery. In its protecting quiet, with the Elsie books and the Rollo books looking wistfully on, she followed the Count to Monte Cristo and beyond.

From that time she lived a new and secret life. Perhaps if she had been found out at the very first, the days in the library might have ended until she was quite grown up, with her hair on top of her head and callers of her own. But she wasn't.

By and by the old joy of pretending

came back. And after that, no matter how often it might flicker, it could always be fanned back into a clear bright flame by the magic that lived behind glass doors on the library shelves.

VIII

"For each age is a dream that is dying
Or one that is coming to birth."

WHEN THE CHILDREN WERE SMALL they went to the farm for the summer, but when Ernest was twelve their mother and father decided to go to Wequetonsing, in northern Michigan. Their father went up in May and rented a cottage from Mr. Newton, who lived on a street near the lake. Pictures of it on post cards came to mother, and Ernest and the child pored over them, choosing which rooms should be theirs and which of the low-hanging pine trees in the yard they should elect to play under. The pictures showed a wide low porch, with comfortable-looking chairs and lounges on it. Then there was the lake, a stone's throw from the porch, and on the little patch of water which the picture showed they could see ships—sailing-ships and steamboats, rowboats and canoes.

For several weeks before starting the whole family made its preparations, each

in his or her own way. Mother made lists, very methodically, of the clothes which would be needed—clothes for hot days, clothes for cold. Father spent more time at the office than usual and explained it by saying, "Getting things in shape so I can stay away all summer."

Ellen visited all her relatives, went to church very often, and took many bottles of medicine to ward off seasickness. The fact that the journey—of two days—was to be made on a steamer seemed to her to be full of peril both of body and of soul. She told the children stories of storms at sea, and shipwreck, but for the first time they laughed at her and called her "old silly," and Ernest said he was going to get acquainted with the captain and sit up by the wheel, and the child said that she too would get acquainted with the captain and would steer the ship! This was partly to reassure Ellen. But Ellen was sure that she would be seasick because it always made her ill to go on the train from Galesburg to Toluca, forty miles away.

The children counted the days—"day after to-morrow it will be a week till we

start." They packed their little satchels on Monday. Of course, before Friday came they had to unpack them for toothbrushes and combs several times a day, but whenever you had to take your toothbrush out of the satchel you could pretend that you were brushing your teeth on a boat.

They went through their customary routine of deciding which possessions to take with them. Ernest's goat was out of the question. He was very dear to the children, and they discovered in him all sorts of delightful and companionable traits—which were the very ones Ellen and their mother and various callers most disliked. He would follow them about, just as Sport, Ernest's dog, followed them, anywhere, and he would stand quietly beside callers whose gowns had tassels. The child never could see why the goat liked tassels. They were so apt to get twisted up inside of you and tickle. There was no question about Sport. Ernest washed him with the garden hose and polished up the plate on his collar. Then he approached his mother for money to buy a new leash.

"But you don't need a new leash now," she said. "Sport will be in the country all summer. You can get one in the fall."

The children looked at each other.

"But I thought—Isn't Sport going?" Ernest's voice trembled.

"Of course not, dear. We can't undertake to keep a dog in a strange place, and besides they don't allow dogs and cats there. Big Kirg will take fine care of him at the farm. And you can have a new leash in the fall."

That was the end of the matter. They went out and sat on the barn steps, and Ernest held Sport's head under his arm, rubbing his cheek against Sport's inquiring, snuffling face.

The child wandered off to the playhouse where the horned toads lived.

Fear clutched at her heart. What if mother should tell her that they couldn't go? They were so little and so quiet and so unspeakably dear. There were two of them. Rosencranz and Alcibiades. She had brought them home from California the year before, in a box of sand. Rosencranz was a fat, puffy toad, with soft knobs

all over him. He had been found on Point Loma, lying solemnly on a gun base at the fort. Alcibiades was discovered in Mrs. Webster's garden one day during the child's lesson, while Mrs. Webster was reading *Stories of Famous Greeks*. The child chose Alcibiades rather than one of the more virtuous Greeks, because its sound delighted her. She learned to spell it: A-l, al; c-i, ci; b-i, bi; ades—Alcibiades. It was a hard word to divide into syllables, but it was a wonderfully impressive word to use before the other little girls at school.

Alcibiades was very dear to the child. He was a particularly ugly horned toad. He had a strangely mottled stomach. Mrs. Webster told her that they were hieroglyphs, and she used to pretend that they were a secret code about the lost treasure of the Incas. He was never round and fat and solid like Rosencranz, nor would he lie dozing in a warm spot of sunlight, indifferent to the seductive flies that played around him. He had all sorts of endearing little ways—no one else ever noticed them, but the child knew each one, and thrilled with pride when he raised his

lean, lumpy body on his forefeet and snapped at a fly in the air, like a dog barking at squirrels.

The toads lived in a little box of sand. When the warmth of the sun began to disappear, they would burrow down into the sand until they were completely hidden. Rosencranz was always very careful to get completely under, and after the last tip of his tail had disappeared he would shake himself and the sand would settle over him, like a blanket, for the night.

Alcibiades always went to sleep before he had finished burrowing and would leave his back legs and tail sticking out. The child loved Alcibiades the better because she had to sprinkle the sand over his indifferent legs.

That night she asked her mother if she could take the toads.

"I don't see why not," she said. "We can get a small box for them to travel in and there will be lots of nice sand at Wequetonsing for them."

The child threw her arms around her in an ecstasy of gratitude and relief.

At last they started,—with the bustle

and excitement of saying good-by to Sport and the goat and Aunt Sarah, and of getting all the bags and Ellen and the umbrellas into the train. Then Ernest discovered that he had forgotten the lunch. That was exactly what Ernest and the child wanted. They did not take much stock in their mother's ideas about food—and the fact that "you can't be sure about the food you get on dining-cars," was one of its delights. The unknown tempted and allured.

There was a day in Chicago before they took the boat. Their mother shopped and Ellen took Ernest and the child to the Art Institute. Ernest stayed outside and looked at the lions and dumps filling in the swampy land between Michigan Avenue and the lake.

Ellen and the child wandered about looking at pictures. After a horrified look at the fawns and satyrs and marble nymphs of the Greek rooms, Ellen fled to the security of Claude Lorraine landscapes. Sea pictures had a melancholy fascination for her—especially those with wrecks featured in them.

Their mother had said that they were to look at pictures for an hour, so they did. Then they went back to the hotel, collected their belongings, and started for the boat.

For all her eagerness of anticipation, the voyage was a blank in the child's mind. Only one thing about it stood out with any distinctness, and that was the throbbing of the engines.

At first Mr. Newton's cottage did not seem quite the wonder place the post cards had pictured it. It was raining when the family arrived and all the chairs on the porch were leaning against the wall with their backs arched inhospitably outward. Inside the children prowled about, feeling cramped in the three rooms, and Ernest immediately discovered a knothole through which a sly stream of water poured.

They could hear the lake, a block away, roaring and beating fiercely on the shore. But the next morning the sun was shining sturdily and the sidewalks were dry except for shady places under the big trees.

The child did not remember many things about the first part of the summer. Days followed days. She would come home

from a day on the beach or in the sand dunes with Rosencranz and Alcibiades and reply "Just playing" to her mother's questions about what she had been doing.

It was such a stupid thing to ask, anyway. If one told her how one had pretended the "Adventures of Prince Alcibiades" she would listen absently and interrupt with, "What did you do with that white pearl button that came off your sweater?"

Ernest played with some little boys who lived on the other side of the railroad tracks and worked at manual training. They had a workshop, and Ernest spent all of his days there making scrolls and wooden boats.

One day the child was sitting on the porch, helping Alcibiades and Rosie catch flies. She saw Ernest coming slowly down the walk, bent over like a very old and tired man. He went past her into the house, and then she heard her mother's voice, sharp with anxiety, asking him questions.

After that there were days when people walked about on tiptoe and talked in whis-

pers and doctors came and went. No one told the child what was the matter with Ernest. No one paid any attention to her. Ellen combed her hair in the morning and told her to "run away and play now."

Then one day her father took her into Mr. Newton's parlor where the blinds were drawn, and told her that Ernest had appendicitis and that a doctor was coming from Chicago to operate on him that afternoon. The child must be very quiet and not go far away to play. She sat still, thinking. Appendicitis awed her. She had never heard the word before. It was a mysterious, sinister-sounding word. She wondered what it was and where Ernest had it and where he had caught it. Operation was more familiar. Ellen's Uncle Axel had had an operation. They were dreadful things, Ellen said—cut you with knives and took pieces of you away. The child shuddered. Poor Ernest! She listened at the door of her mother's room where he was lying, and she could hear him moan. Gently she pushed open the door and went in. Ernest was in mother's bed and mother was sitting by him. He was

talking to her, and she patted his hand and said, "There, there," in a soothing, singing tone. Ernest was talking about a wild cat that was on the roof, and about cutting scrolls with the jig-saw.

The child knew what he meant. It was for the big boat that the boys were making. The scrolls were to go on the deck to rest cannon on. Her mother just patted him and said, "There, there." Ernest's voice went on monotonously, over and over, saying the same things. The child stood at the foot of the bed and he looked at her. "Ernest," she said, but he didn't answer. Then her mother whispered, "Kiss Ernest."

So she kissed him, and laid her face for a minute by his face on the pillow. She tiptoed out of the room. At the door she looked back and saw, not Ernest, but a cheap lithograph of "Christ Among the Doctors" which hung over the bed.

And that is one of the scenes across which a sharp light of remembrance falls.

After Ernest died the child was very lonely. She wandered about with Alcibi-

ades and Rosie, spending more time in the sand dunes and less on the beach. Something was wrong with Alcibiades. He would lie for hours without making any effort to catch flies, even when they spread their wings tauntingly before him. The stodgy Rosie showed more interest in life than Alcibiades.

She spent a great deal of time walking in the woods with Ellen. One day they found a snail, a very pompous shelly snail, crawling across a tree trunk. It crawled unsuspecting on a leaf and the child picked it up. It pulled in its soft, peering horns, and then its whole body. The shell rolled over on its side, and she wrapped the leaf around it. How jolly to pull yourself in when you were annoyed!

The snail went home with her. She put it in the horned toads' box. Rosie stuck out his tongue at it lazily. Alcibiades ignored it stolidly. Well, a snail shell in itself was not exciting. No wonder that the clever Alcibiades did not bother to look at it.

After breakfast the next morning, the child went to get Alcibiades and Rosie for

their morning's sunning. When she took off the lid of their box she grew sick with horror. Rosie was still a little hummock of sand—she knew his shape—but Al, the dear, ugly Alcibiades, was lying on his back, a great bulgy lump on his hieroglyphic stomach. We usually know elemental things intuitively. She knew that Alcibiades was dead. Almost before the question was formulated in her mind she knew that he had eaten the snail and that the snail had killed him. She threw her hands over her eyes and ran to Ellen. That Alcibiades should be dead was too impossible to believe. That she had killed him by putting the snail in the box was too bitterly uppermost in her mind.

Ellen tried to comfort her. She never had felt comfortable with Alcibiades and Rosie about. "Those toads give me the creeps" she would say, but at the same time she would carry particularly nice bluebottle flies to them in her duster. And now that the child had turned to her in her affliction she did not fail her. Ellen's very lack of imagination made her sometimes the most wonderful of comforters. She

had a very simple dogmatic faith, and no doubt she would have denied Alcibiades the possession of a soul. But death was something she responded to. She had learned from her attendance at funerals all of the phrases about immortality dear to a believer's heart. There was a glamour about them that she loved, and she recited them unctuously.

"The Lord giveth and the Lord taketh away—blessed be the name of the Lord."

The child had sobbed herself out and was lying with her head in Ellen's lap, tired and hopeless. "He didn't," she said, wearily. "He didn't! I found Alcibiades in Mrs. Webster's garden, and that old snail killed him. Marian is dead and Ernest is dead and now Al is dead!"

"You've got Rosie," reminded Ellen, in a count-your-blessings tone.

"He's not the same," gloomily. "He's different, somehow."

That afternoon they buried Alcibiades under the ash tree, in a candy box filled with sand. When Ellen was busy digging the hole the child covered him with her best lace handkerchief and put on the lid.

They buried Alcibiades and planted a wild strawberry on his grave.

Things went on as they always had. She and Ellen took walks in the woods and had picnics on the beach. Sometimes she went to parties that other little girls had, but she wanted to play by herself, with her own thoughts and the sadness of her grief.

Ernest and Alcibiades had been the dearest two persons in her life. In a short summer both had gone.

IX

"Ah, you are so great, and I am so small
I tremble to think of you, World, at all!"

IT WAS A LITTLE COVERED BASKET THAT started the child's running away. It was just such a basket as you would run away with; it would hold the things you most wanted to take—a few cookies and the last cake of chocolate that you had bought and carefully saved for just this journey. Mother found it when she was putting moth balls and camphor in the trunk upstairs, and gave it to the child "for her own." (That was a formula which had always to be gone through with whenever anyone gave her anything that she particularly liked; a relic, perhaps, of the days when there had been acute rivalry for the possession of things between Marian and her.)

She took it out to her playhouse, which was a funny little pen, originally intended for the horse. Then she squatted worshipfully down before it and began to plan.

The basket was what started running away as the great desire of the summer for her. It was a smallish basket, with a cover which opened in halves and a very convenient handle. It was light enough to be carried easily, and especially not to arouse suspicion in the minds of the people one met on the street. It was rather hard to decide which of the hoard of little things which were stored away in the playhouse she should take with her. All the affection which little girls usually give to dolls she gave to the "treasures" which were collected in her "cabinet," which had been born in protesting imitation of the satinwood cabinet which stood aloofly in the front parlor. The playhouse cabinet was a box with shelves that Ward had put in for her one afternoon when her mother had gone to a D. A. R. meeting at the other end of the town. The specimens were arranged on the shelves and in boxes, all numbered and catalogued like those she had seen once in the Field Museum in Chicago. There were bottles of various kinds, mostly filled with water, though some of them held a very much diluted perfumery.

These were the bottles that were thrown out with the scent of the roses still clinging to them. She had some beautiful door knobs, with odd cuttings which made them quite unsatisfactory as door knobs, but altogether delightful as diamonds. They were kept in a cast-off jewelry box, on pink cotton. She hid them at night because of thieves.

Of course there were other reasons besides the basket for the child's impulse to run away. School had lasted unusually long that year and she wanted to let her hair grow, and instead, with the first suspicion of spring, her mother had taken her to the barber to have it shingled again. She was too old for short hair. She liked the feeling of it, and she liked ducking her head under the faucet without having to have it dried in the sun afterwards. But on the other hand, Gladys Parker wore hers in long curls; so did Marjorie Blake and so did Rose Thorpe. The handicap of straight, short hair was beyond bearing for a plain child.

If she ran away, of course her hair would

grow in undisturbed abundance, and she hadn't a doubt that she would be almost as beautiful as Gladys. But there was still another reason, remotely connected with hair, and that was parties. She couldn't go to parties in the evening. All the other little girls did and they stayed until nine, sometimes half past. She begged her mother to let her go because she hated having the others feeling sorry for her, or making fun of her, as their natures might be. Once when she did go to a party, Ellen was sent for her at half past eight, and no amount of telephoning on the part of Mrs. Parker could persuade mother to let her stay for "refreshments." She went home and cried, not so much because she had missed the ice-cream and cake as because there had been no letter in the "Post Office" for her. Some time later, when her mother wanted her to have a party, she hedged in every possible way. All the days suggested were used up by school things, or the people couldn't come. Besides, one never had parties in the afternoon. The boys played baseball and the girls didn't want them without the boys.

Her mother said this was nonsense. She didn't approve of evening parties for children. The child should have her party in the afternoon or not at all. That was just what she wanted.

"I can't have a party in the afternoon," she explained. "I *won't* ask Gladys and Marjorie and Rose to come and play dolls. They're too old." And she ran away.

"I don't know where you get your stubbornness," said her mother that evening when she came to turn out her light.

Even hair and parties and school did not supply all the reasons for wanting to run away. The child wanted a change. She was tired of her clothes and the meals that came three times a day. She disliked her mother and father particularly. They were very unreasonable. . . . Probably she was not their real child. In fact, that was the explanation of a great many unpleasant aspects of her life. She thought about it a great deal, and the more she thought the surer she was. She would sit in the playhouse, chin on hands, having conversations with herself. First she would be the superintendent of the Foundlings Home,

telling her mother and father, who had come for a "nice child of respectable parents," about the great mystery connected with her—a gold locket and a note asking the finder to be kind to her. Then she would be a mysterious lady, with beautiful swishing skirts, who came to see how she was getting on. She used to come at night, and would sit on the edge of the child's bed telling stories about the castle from which she had been stolen. The little girl felt rather superior to Marjorie and Rose, for she was sure that they had never been stolen from a castle. But this was too subjective a superiority to make up for the disgrace about parties.

Running away, then, was what came of the urge of all these dissatisfactions. The little basket gave the final shove.

It took some planning to run away. It took also a great deal of caution. She decided on Friday as the best possible day. With a child's instinctive hoarding of Saturday she wanted to begin her adventure in freedom with the day of which she was sure. Then Sunday, following, without church or Sunday school, would be an open

defiance to routine, and Monday—she hardly thought that far ahead. All of Friday she was very much excited. When school was out she put her books neatly away in the desk, and wrote a note to Miss Alger, the second-grade teacher, announcing that she was running away to be a gypsy, and carefully copying some verses about autumn which she thought were particularly beautiful, out of the Third Reader.

At home she repacked the basket. Belle had made some fresh ginger cookies, and after several open and several secret visits to the kitchen she collected quite a sizable supply. She took the diamond, and a little china dog without a tail that she liked to have in the tub with her when she had her bath.

After supper she sat on the porch with her mother and father. While they discussed the news in the evening paper, she talked to herself softly and romantically. Little did they know that to-morrow evening she would not be there! They would undoubtedly be heart-broken. She felt a little sorry for them. After all, they were

as good as they could be—considering that she was an adopted child. It was too bad. The dark began to creep up around the porch. Mother started to hum the song about the "Little brown church in the wildwood" and father smoked without saying anything.

Familiar things in the yard began to look strange and much larger than they had looked in the sunlight. The lion's head on the hitching-post grew enormous and began to move up and down.

The clock in the front hall struck eight and the child got up and kissed her mother, who stopped rocking for a minute and folded her in her arms. Her father kissed her absent-mindedly and went on smoking. On the bottom stair she turned and looked at the clock, and the huge bronze jar from some Japanese temple that stood before the fireplace, black and ominous.

Her clothes were attached to her by a fairly complex system of buttons, but they could be detached all at once by unbuttoning a few buttons. Then they lay where they fell, a shell into which she could creep again in the morning. To-night she

kissed Ellen with more fervor than usual, and then she slid way down into the middle of the bed, pulling the sheets up around her chin, listening and waiting for the house to settle down for the night.

By and by the dark swallowed up the dusk. Soon the child heard the porch chairs being moved into the house, and then the loud hum of the screen door as it slammed shut. She could hear her mother in the hall talking to Ellen about a sociable that the Swedish Lutheran Church was having the next afternoon. After a while the voices died away and the house was wrapped in the quiet dark of the evening.

After what seemed a safe interval she crawled out from the cave of sheets. Before putting on her clothes, she very carefully humped up the sheets, using a pillow as a bolster, so that her mother or Ellen, passing, would be deceived, and not sound the alarm until she had gotten a good head start in Away.

This done, she put on her clothes and got the little basket which was hiding in readiness behind the shoe box in the closet. She

pushed the door open wider than its accustomed crack and looked cautiously into the hall. It was dark. She tiptoed over to the wall. The board that she was on creaked loudly; so did the boards on each side of it. She tried taking very long and very light steps, holding her breath, as far as the stairway. The stairs, at least, did not creak, for they were heavily carpeted. On the landing she could hear the ticking of the clock. It sounded like the hoarse breathing of a very large person.

Her mind was a kaleidoscope of thoughts as she went down the stairs. She remembered things that must have happened when she was a baby—odd formless things: a light that had bobbed before her eyes and which she tried vainly to catch; a great black shadow that lay underneath the house, and never moved all the time that she was there in her carriage; and once when her mother had slapped her hands for trying to catch a beautiful, shining, swinging thing that had hung from her neck. The only thing, almost, that she didn't think of was what she was going to do after the next day. She

thought of the pleasantness of not having to go to school and to listening to a hurdy-gurdy in the street. She thought that perhaps she might be in Chicago by the next night. . . . All this is very long in the telling. The way down the steps seemed very long—much longer than twenty steps. The last ten were much darker than the first. The hall downstairs was so dark that she could hardly breathe, and instinctively she put out her hands to ward off something. The little basket swung bravely ahead of her. She took a few steps, uncertain just where to turn. It must be here. And she turned.

There was a crash, then a hollow echo, like the sound of a temple gong. It came almost from under the child's feet. Before it had died down she heard her mother's voice saying: "What is it? What is it?" and the lower hall was flooded with light.

Dazed, she stood there looking down at the malignant bronze jar which was still tingling faintly, like an empty sea shell. She gripped the little basket and turned to face her mother and father. They both

asked questions: What was she doing? Why was she dressed? What did she mean by ringing the gong? Why did she have the basket?

But a kind of dumbness settled down on her. She could never run away again. That conviction came with a swift certainty. She couldn't. Something would always happen.

She turned wearily to go upstairs. Her mother took her arm and shook her gently. "Wake up," she said. "You've been walking in your sleep."

So the child was tucked into bed and kissed, and outside the half-closed door she heard mother say: "She eats too much supper. Think I'll try plain cereal for a while. . . ."

The lights snapped off, and she lay in her cave, with the covers pulled about her ears. . . .

X

". . . and yet mayhap for the first time will the wind really blow and the moonlight fall. . . ."

It was an exciting journey that the child and her father made on the train to pay a visit to Great-aunt Katherine. The child had never seen Great-aunt Katherine, but she was a figure of almost legendary importance in the household. When her father and mother went to California for a year they asked Great-aunt Katherine if she would take care of the child. To which she replied, by telegram: "I dislike children. If, however, I take a fancy to your little girl, I will keep her."

The child was breathlessly eager to be liked. She clung to her father's hand as they went down the gravel path to the front door, which had vines hanging over it like a beard. A pebble got into one of the child's slippers. She thought that it would be a splendid time to see if she might not be a princess. There was a princess who couldn't sleep with a pea under

her mattress. (A pebble in one's new patent-leather shoes was much more painful.) That might, perhaps, make a difference to Great-aunt Katherine. The child would take her aside and whisper, "I am really a princess," and of course she would be delighted to have her stay.

As they stood before the door the child's eyes were on a level with a hideous grinning knocker. The beast had round staring eyes which protruded evilly, pointed ears, and a straining look, as though it were trying to get away from the shining screws which held it in place. She had a new respect for her father when he walked up to it and grasped it by the nose in a very unconcerned way, letting it fall with a crash which brought Aunt Katherine's Susie scurrying to the door.

Somehow they got into the angular, black-satin presence of Great-aunt Katherine. At first the child had no comprehension of her essential kindness. She used to lie awake at night and hang about her all the unpleasant qualities she knew, like wreaths upon a statue.

At tea, that day, there were a great many little cakes, short bread, and sandwiches, and shining silver tea things. A long time afterward the child had high tea with some people at Aberdeen, and she had the oddest impression that they were using her Great-aunt Katherine's silver pitchers and pots. There was a strange familiarity to the scene, and she scanned the round apple face of Mrs. Jack, expecting it to harden into the stern old visage into which she stared that afternoon.

And then when the tea things were taken away, Great-aunt Katherine said, quite abruptly: "You may leave the child here. I'll take care of her." And this was before she had been told about the pebble!

The steady creeping-up of the slow little fire began to make dancing figures before the child's eyes, and she had just a faint recollection of being bathed and put to bed by the strange but kind Susie.

And then there is a clear spot in her memory; with perfect distinctness she remembered lying on her bed under the high

window with the wind blowing a branch of the white pear tree gently back and forth in front of it. She wondered if her father would wear buckles in his nose. Earrings would be nice, but buckles were rather like a pig. Then Great-aunt Katherine and Susie passed before the mirror of her mind, and they were carrying—how odd!—branches of white pear blossoms before a high brass face with bulging eyes, grinning evilly, and something very like a lace cap tied under its chin.

A bat flew against the window just then and she could see its black shadow on the wall opposite her bed. Through the open window she heard for the first time the complex of sounds which always comes to her mind when there has been a great emotion of any kind. . . . Far off from the reeds by the river came the steady two-toned sound of a frog, with a shrill chorus of cicadas, and all around the house the low swish of wind making the long grass of the yard seem like a wheat field, swaying and rustling. Once there were a couple

of sharp barks from the dog at the next house, quarter of a mile away. And all the sounds seemed like water dipped from the stream, and then poured back again, over and over and over. . . .

XI

"A wedding or a festival
A mourning or a funeral."

THE CHILD ALWAYS HATED GOING BACK home, and it was always necessary, especially when she lived with her Great-aunt Katherine, who was incredibly prompt, herself, at meals. Meals were the times when the child was most often late. It was a longish way from the river where she played, to the dining-room, particularly when she had to delay things by going upstairs to wash the parts of her face that showed most. She never could see why Great-aunt Katherine was so eager to be at the table when the lunch bell rang. It was such an unsatisfactory lunch—cold things, with canned pears for dessert. Cold mutton was cold mutton no matter what she pretended about it.

Her Great-aunt Katherine used to sit and watch her with a grim sort of approval, comparing her with the unruly child she was six months before. She took a vast

deal of comfort in comparisons, did Great-aunt Katherine: this year's roses, last year's turnips, and poor dear Mr. Bright, the rector who was not by half the preacher that his father was before him.

Sometimes when the child had been on time for a week Great-aunt Katherine would take her on a journey. This was one of the earthly rewards for obedience that she was always baiting her with—the child mistrusted the heavenly ones, and she knew it. Their ideas about journeys differed widely. In the library at home the little girl had met Prince Henry the Navigator and Sir John Mandeville and Prester John, and she journeyed in galleys and in caravans. Great-aunt Katherine journeyed like the three wise men, slowly, humpily and meditatively, as though she would have liked a manger as her destination, instead of the village.

She walked sedately down the piazza steps, along the garden path, the wind from her skirts stirring up little eddies of pebbles as she walked. It was a pleasant path, for beside it white phlox and blue larkspur and moon-colored Canterbury bells grew

high as her shoulders, with big bees buzzing round their cups. At the gate the path joined the road and went beside it into the village. There were a great many copper-beech trees along the road. As soon as they reached the village street dozens of other paths came out to meet them. The child used to think that the paths were watch-dogs and that the gates were to keep them from jumping out and running away.

Great-aunt Katherine always went to the same houses in the village, the rector's and Miss Debby's. Miss Debby was the undertaker's sister, and she was always fluttering with a subdued kind of excitement.

The child used to hear scraps of conversation between Miss Rebby and Great-aunt Katherine and once she thought that she had discovered the secret of her unrest. She was mending a tiny hole in the black silk mits she always wore, and she said in her rustling voice:

"Yes, in this profession we must be always ready, quite ready, for we know not the day nor the hour when the bridegroom cometh."

Sly Miss Debby, thought the child. Susie, Great-aunt Katherine's little maid, had waited for a bridegroom who had turned out to be only Seaton, the gardener.

Once a funeral passed in the street and Miss Debby hurried to the window to pull the dark curtains across it. Then the two old women and the little girl sat for a long time without saying a word, and the only sounds that came into the silent room seemed very loud and ominous, the rolling wheels of the hearse and the carriages and the occasional snap of an ember dying in the grate, where Miss Debby always had a little fire. Through the open window nearest the church they could hear the rector's voice saying:

"And the grasshopper shall be a burden,
And the desire shall fail; because man goeth to his long home;
And the mourners go about the streets:
Or ever the silver cord be loosed, or the golden bowl be broken,
Or the pitcher be broken at the fountain, or the wheel broken at the cistern."

For a while, then, everything was still, until a song wailed out, followed by an-

other silence, and afterward the sound of many feet moving. Miss Debby put another piece of wood on the fire and Great-aunt Katherine shivered slightly.

"We must go home, child," she said, rather gently. And so they made a journey back. "I recall," said Great-aunt Katherine, as she reached her own gate, "how poor dear Mr. Bright's father read that passage when your Great-uncle Jonathan died."

XII

"Thus gods are made,
and whoso makes them otherwise shall die. . . ."

IT WAS GREAT-AUNT KATHERINE'S NATURE to be churchly. Besides, she was fond of the rector. He had watery blue eyes and a lisp. You couldn't help feeling that he was dubious about the past, a little uncertain about the future and very uncomfortable about the present. He was extremely orthodox, and devoted to gardening. He used to drive a fat pony hitched to a low basket chaise. Sometimes he would come back from the woods with the chaise filled with moss and lichens and branches of flowering thorn, while he walked beside the pony. Great-aunt Katherine was fond of him more for his love of gardens than for his love of God. He seemed to have more positiveness in his feeling for hardy annuals than for the law and the prophets. The rector was quite inextricably bound up with the child's stay with her great-aunt. Once, sitting beside

Great-aunt Katherine in church, looking up at him, she said over and over to herself: "Golly, golly, golly!" holding her breath for God to smite her. Then later on when she learned "damn," she whispered it softly throughout a prayer, with a lump of excitement in her throat, waiting for a white-hot bolt of lightning to break the dim quiet of the church. There was the day when the rector sat in Great-aunt Katherine's front parlor, his hands on his knees, shyly telling her about the parish, and about the slugs on his tomato vines and the dangers of woman suffrage. The child sat on a little stool, and thought how dull it was to talk about slugs and militant women when he held the key to so many mysteries. Their talk passed to the confirmation class, and dwindled off among the Thirty-nine Articles. The child stopped to meditate on the Commandments. The first ones were the most interesting. She had no desire to steal, kill, or to commit adultery, but she did have an intense consuming desire to make unto herself a graven image and to bow down and worship it. The next day she went by the

church on her way to the village and could hear the confirmation class droning out those alluring and appalling words:

"Thou shalt have no other gods before me. Thou shalt not make unto thee any graven image, or any likeness of anything that is in heaven above, or that is in the earth beneath, or that is in the water underneath the earth. Thou shalt not bow down thyself to them nor serve them. . . ." The tremendous threat at the end left her cold with excitement. She had no particular personal feeling about God. She more than half suspected him of being a kind of celestial bluff, especially since that unpunished "damn" episode. She pictured him as an active, though fairly elderly gentleman, a little inclined to be crotchety like Stebbins, the gardener, when his gout was bad, and his attitude toward other gods reminded her of her father's attitude toward his business competitors.

The desire to transgress the law became stronger within her and at last she made up her mind to make unto herself a god, and to worship him. Then she should see how much there was in the threats of the

Deity by whom Great-aunt Katherine set such store. That would give her some data for future transgressions. First she tried making a graven image with one of the cook's kitchen knives. The result was a spindling totem pole toward which she could feel no stirrings of reverence. After that she tried constructing a god out of fruit-jars filled with cotton, to which she set fire. The jars cracked miserably and dirtily, filled with a horrid smudge. Then she found a wheel off of one of Great-aunt Katherine's old carriages, and rolled it down to the river, where she wound it with branches from the willow tree. With an elaborate ritual she set it afloat, but, though the branches kept it up a while, it soon sank with a faint gurgle to the bottom, where it lay still, inspected by curious little minnows. By this time the creative impulse was beginning to diminish. That night the child lay awake, trying to think of a real god. There was the *Boy's Handy Book*, which told one how to make any number of unfamiliar things, but remained noncommittal about gods. She supposed that the author of the *Boy's*

Handy Book was, like a rector, under the influence of the threats uttered so sonorously every Sunday. She wondered, as she lay there, if God would creep out of the darkness and carry her off. She wondered if it would do any good to scream, and whether if she did Great-aunt Katherine would think she ought to interfere with the course of Divine Wrath. But nothing came. The child was not afraid of the great quiet dark, except when streaks of moonlight fell across it, throwing familiar objects out of focus and sharpening the unknown corners of the cupboards and bureaus.

So she fell asleep. The next day she went down to the river to play in the old tree that swept almost entirely across it. Close up to the shore, in the water, she could see the smooth roundish pebbles that formed part of the stream bed. She had always had the keenest sense of delight in little inanimate things, and with a kind of instinctive paganism she slipped to the ground and on her knees beside the water. Scooping out a handful of the smoothest stones, she arranged them in a circle, piling

one on the other, until she had an altar there by the brook. Then she gathered cowslips and laid them on the stones, and over them all she sprinkled fine white sand. There is an odd association of memories about that altar. Years afterward she came across an epigram of Leonidas of Tarentum which brought a perfectly clear picture to her mind—a pile of round, polished stones, a slow little stream, a low-hanging willow tree, and the fresh wet smell of cowslips strewn about the altar. It was an epitaph on a little girl who had "*passed untimely to Hades, in her seventh year, before her many playmates, poor thing; pining for her baby brother who at twenty months old tasted of loveless death. Alas! how near at hand God has set the sorest griefs to man.*"

For several days the child brazenly defied the jealous God. She worshiped everything with an unflattering promiscuousness. She even worshiped herself in the mirror, though that embarrassed her, for it reminded her of freckles that she had been trying to forget. Besides, it was just as unsatisfactory to worship herself

as a jagged totem pole. There was nothing mysterious about her.

So for several days she worshiped fruitlessly. God stayed in his heaven and ignored her. Perhaps, she thought, he visited iniquities only on really distinguished persons. Then it occurred to her that if the rector could by any chance be induced to worship a graven image, God would be forced to show his hand. The question was how to bring it about. She thought of the altar.

The next day she met the rector driving his fat pony hitched to the chaise. He was redder-eyed than usual. The smell of the clover gave him hay fever. He stopped the pony, and the child climbed in beside him. They were really rather friendly. She told him that there were cowslips and marigolds and blue iris by the stream, and that she had seen a blue heron standing on one leg on the bank. He suggested that they go and look for him. The child felt like Delilah. She even had a moment of doubt. Perhaps rectors were not distinguished enough. But it was too late to turn back. They tied the pony to the

low apple tree by the wall and climbed over into the meadow. There was the altar, by the stream, the cowslips a little withered. "What smooth stones!" remarked the rector. "It must be an altar to Pan." And he laid the stone back on top of the others. Then he began to weave, very deftly, a wreath of weedy grass and cowslips. The little girl watched him in terrified fascination. She wanted to tell him that his God was a jealous God. He must have forgotten it when he left the village and the confirmation class droning away at the catechism. Instead, she grew curiously dumb and frightened. She pictured herself dragging the rector's dead body across the meadow and propping it up in the chaise, and then the dreary ride back to the village.

Now he stopped and put the wreath on the altar, smiling a little as he did so and saying some words that she did not understand:

> πὰν φίλε, πήκτιδα' μίμνε πεοῖς ἐπιχείλεοι σύρων,
> Ἤχω γὰρ δήεις τοῖο ὀ'ἐὴι θειλοηέδοις.

He said them over slowly to her afterward and explained that they meant:

"Dear Pan, abide here, drawing the pipe over thy lips,
For thou wilt find Echo on these sunny greens."

After that he stood for a long time looking down at the little pile of stones, and the child noticed that there were tears in his faded eyes. By and by they turned back to the chaise. God had ignored their transgression.

At breakfast the next morning Great-aunt Katherine said in her dust-to-dust tone: "I want you to take some of our tomato plants over to the rector. The slugs have fairly riddled his vines, Stebbins says. I suppose the weather is so warm that once they get a start there's no stopping them."

XIII

". . . And there were seven
Buried cities in Ilium."

THE TOP FLOOR WAS THE ATTIC. IN IT were the doll beds; the little iron stove on which you could cook a thimble-sized steak; the cow which mooed when you turned its head; the pony with real pony skin, and a red and black cart; the rows of "Five Little Peppers" and "Pansy" books and all the "Dotty Dimples."

There were long cracks between the boards of the floor, and by lying on your stomach and crawling inch by inch, with one of Ellen's hairpins as an implement, you could unearth long sinuous serpents of imbedded dust. It was hard to get the serpent out without breaking it. Sometimes you came upon a pin, or a bit of broom straw, and sometimes a glass bead. Beads were treasure. Finding one, you suspended operations while you thought where it had come from. Was it from the kindergarten box? No, it was too small

Kindergarten beads were strung on shoe laces. Or the bead portières between the parlor and the hall? Hardly. It was too gay and fragile. One of mother's dresses, perhaps—the beautiful one which twinkled, and was already an old dress and interred somewhere in the old trunks.

There were old hair trunks in the attic. They stood in rows in the ell, while the contemporary trunks, whose name "Innovation" stamped them as interlopers, occupied the "front attic." These newcomers had no charm in themselves, no rusty locks or frayed leather straps, no secrets hidden beneath their heavy lids—only flannels in summer, nainsook in winter. Their sole virtue was that they were the harbingers of going away.

The little trunks stood like tombstones along the wall. During the spring and fall house-cleaning they were dusted, opened, lined with fresh newspapers. The child loved the little trunks and had a great yearning to explore them. Unfortunately, the semiannual approach to godliness was not the time for voyages of discovery. She bided her time. It came

when her father and mother were away for a week. Their joint absence made a delightful interlude in the domestic routine. Ellen would let her sleep late in the morning and go down the back stairs into the kitchen in her nightgown to a feast of pancakes sodden with maple syrup. After breakfast she would say: "You run along and play. I'll make your bed while your mamma's away."

Playing in the attic was ordinarily sacred to rainy days. But mother was in Chicago. What fun it was to have mother away! How good sweet-milk pancakes were! . . . The child went up to the attic. The sun drifted through a little dormer window and made a domino on the floor. She stood on her tiptoes and looked out. There was Mr. Parsons watering his lawn with the hose. When it was very hot he let you stand in front of it.

Hairpin in hand, she started digging. By and by the trail led her to the little trunks, where she had no legitimate interest. Ellen was downstairs making the beds, and singing "Jesus Loves Me", which the child liked because it presented Jesus in

a more agreeable light than many of the Gospel Hymns. The time, the place, and Jesus seemed favorable for research. The straps were easy to unbuckle, and the lids opened. . . .

First there was the top tray, covered with last year's *Daily Republican Register*. There was President McKinley's picture. Ellen said that he was a fine man and good to his wife. She lifted President McKinley off gently, because he was good to his wife—and besides, he must be replaced, just as she had found him.

Underneath were rows and rows of little books, with *Diary* and *Journal* on their backs. She knew what a diary was, because her mother had given her one for Christmas. It was a book where you wrote your secret thoughts. No, not so secret. Her mother always read what she had written and added in her own hand pious sentiments: "Search the Scriptures"; "Be not weary in well doing"; "Is my little girl using *awfully* and *fine* too often?" "Have you recorded any kind act today?" At first the child resented these intrusions upon her secret chronicle, for she was en-

tranced by its green leather cover and her own initials in gold, but when she realized that it was her mother's copy-book, its charm vanished and she became a smug little creature. When she wanted anything particularly, she would make her diary convey, not only the desire, but the justification of the desire. She expressed great affection for her mother, and hinted, not too modestly, at imagined virtues.

And here were other diaries . . . of other little girls? . . . She would save them to the last.

In the next tray were neatly piled layers of clothes—baby clothes. Little dresses with wide embroidered ruffles; petticoats and flannel bands; bibs and little shoes made out of old kid gloves; and Ernest's yellow silk blouse. They all had labels pinned to them. "Our first baby's booties"; "Marian's christening dress"; "Dear little Ernest's silk waist." These were all too close for enchantment. The child had a pink blouse herself. . . . "Baby's first short dress." . . . Baby. She was Baby. She held it up against herself. How very small! But still the pretty, sprigged mus-

lin that she had loved so last year was small. . . .

The bottom of the trunk was dazzling. Dresses. Silk poplins, challis, velvets; a white miracle called "Nellie's wedding dress." Nellie—that was mother. How nice it would be to have mother wear that lovely dress and be married, and she would be the flower girl! The child threw a rose leaf from a golden basket before the beautiful bride. . . . A murmur went through the great church, "What a beautiful FLOWER GIRL!" . . .

There was a taffeta gown, pale green and mauve, rustling, when the child touched it, like old newspapers. "Amity Farr's ball dress. October, 1840." What, exactly, was a ball? Was it a *hop*, where, according to Mr. Farrell at dancing school, gentlemen said, "May I have the pleasure of this dance?" Elsie Dinsmore's father did not approve of balls, nor did her father, who did not dance.

The ball dress lay on the bottom of the trunk. All about it were camphor balls, hardly smelling at all. The child put the trays back, one by one.

"Are you playing, dearie?" called Ellen from below.

"Yes, I'm playing," from the attic. . . .

And now the top tray, with the rows of little closed books. Could she, perhaps, look? Her mother looked in hers. Just once she might look. . . .

Such tight handwriting; such yellow pages. Dates. Ages ago—1848, 1850, 1864, 1894, 1899. . . . The pages rustled under the child's fingers.

". . . Drove all day with my dear husband in our new spring waggon. Crossed the Border into Texas. . . . May God in His Mercy protect us from that which is before us. . . ."

More pages, more little books. The child skimmed through them, not much interested, except for simple things which took her fancy.

". . . Up early this morning. Taught Bunt and Angie the Collect for the day. Put up twenty jars of quince jell. . . ."

She picked up another book. It was full of references to people of whom she had never heard, to places which were in

small print on the maps of her geography. Who was this writing?

". . . By God's mercy Charles is restored to me. He has hidden in the caves for three days and three nights while the Bushwackers scoured the country. They threw his press into the river, thinking him dead or escaped from the state."

How dark the shadows were.

What were "Bushwackers"? She read on, fascinated. . . .

". . . Poor Mr. Tenney was tied naked, back foremost, on his horse and shot, the horse as well, as he rode through the street. . . . Prayed with Mrs. Tenney for an hour, bringing her, I think, some comfort. It helped me to bear my own burden. . . ."

Who was Charles and where were the caves? The child sat cross-legged on the floor, self-hypnotized into a pleasant fear and wonder. From downstairs came Ellen's thin but comforting reassurance:

"*Je*-sus loves me, this I *know*
For the *Bi*-bul tells me so."

The ink was not quite so pale in another row of little books.

". . . Little Nellie recited her text and hymn sweetly to-day. Took her to sit for her likeness

at Mr. Tibbetts'. She wore her flounced pantalettes and cherry silk dress, and held the handsome bisque doll which Chas. has just brought her from St. Louis. Mr. T. said that he had seldom had so well-mannered a sitter, and added that he had never had the pleasure of making my likeness. And I said, 'La! Mr. Tibbetts! I am an old matron with a household and family duties and no time for fol-de-rols!' "

Little Nellie! Her mother's name was Nellie. Her mother with pantalettes and a cherry silk dress and a bisque doll from St. Louis! . . .

How hot it must have been that July in 1869!

". . . Nellie was dressed in her white percale with only two petticoats, for the heat. She took off her shoes and stockings and waded in the pool, but wetted the hem of her dress and was put to bed. . . ."

The child gave a little gasp. Just last week she had been wading with Rose and Jane in the pool where the hydrant had burst. And she had been put to bed for wetting her clean dotted-swiss dress! It was the blue one with red dots and most spots didn't show on it. . . . Poor little Nellie. . . . Had Mr. Parsons begun to

water his lawn yet? It *was* hot in the attic.

The colors of the little books changed. From olive green to gray, from gray to blue, and then in a red volume Nellie made a journey with C. to the East. She brought her mother a black enamel pansy ("very handsome") with a diamond in its center—her grandmother's pansy! It always lay in the soft lace about her neck—and she went to Stewart's store in New York City to buy a carpet and a durable fabric for curtains. And on the way home, between New York and Albany, she broke the journey at the town of Poughkeepsie and visited a friend of C.'s who had started a school there—for young ladies.

". . . Mr. Vassar entertained us royally and filled our arms with flowers from his own gardens and gave us beer, which father pronounced of most excellent quality, brewed not far from the Hudson River. . . . I thought it very bitter. . . ."

Other little books at which the child barely glanced.

". . . My dear daughter Nellie has this day married. Many attended. Some friends drove from as far as Galva. Others came by train to Mag-

nolia. The house was decorated with bright autumn leaves from our own woods. N. made the cakes yesterday and was up early this morning to ice them. Rev. Judson made a beautiful talk on marriage as instituted by our Lord Jesus Christ. N. and her husband much moved. My one regret is that he is not a professing Christian, and I thank God that he has taken a helpmate like N. who will lead him to the throne."

Only a few books remained, very trim and bright beside their fellows. Her mother's handwriting. Something she knew.

". . . Baby Ernest said 'Ma-nan' to-day to his grandmother. He is such a beautiful child. God grant that we may rear him to serve Him. E. away on law business. I respect worthy ambition, but not at the cost of home life and family duties. I regret that my child's father was not here to listen to his first word. . . . I pray that he will see the light. . . ."

From outside came the swish of water. Mr. Parsons was trying out the hose on the sidewalk before attacking the flower beds. The child's short legs were very stiff. She opened the last little book and gazed in horror and chagrin. It was only last year.

". . . Baby was very naughty to-day. I told her father and he punished her, with some severity. She was kept after school and told to write a verse of Scripture ten times, neatly. She wrote, 'Saul, Saul, why persecutest thou me?'"

She got up unsteadily, rubbing her knees. President McKinley was replaced, and the lid creaked into place. Beside the trunk lay a long serpent of dust. She picked it up and tucked it into her pocket for future investigation.

What fun to be alone in the house with Ellen, and the new thoughts which could be pulled out after she was in bed and played with! A new spring wagon; quince jell in rows across a pantry shelf; Bushwackers; a man riding backward on a horse through a dusty village street; wedding cakes with icing—chocolate icing—Ernest, saying "Ma-nan"; herself, beautiful in a pale green and mauve taffeta dress, saying, "I am sorry, but *all* my dances are engaged for this ball!"

XIV

"We are not sure of sorrow,
And joy was never sure;
To-day will die to-morrow;
Time stoops to no man's lure; . . ."

THE GARDEN WAS BEHIND THE HOUSE. The first thing that the child remembered about it was the way that the sweet peas grew taller than she in a single summer. Heights were perplexing things. There were the tall candles in the Catholic church, where she went occasionally with Belle, the cook. Some Sundays they were taller than the little altar boys who snuffed them; some Sundays they were shorter. But the little boys seemed always to stay the same.

It was just this way with the sweet peas. When she was quite a little girl her mother would not let her pick them because she might tear the vines. They would go into the garden together, before breakfast, her mother with the shears and the child trotting behind her with an open basket with long handles. She stood beside her mother

while she clipped, holding the basket up to catch the flowers as they fell.

Once there was a very beautiful sweet pea. She watched it while her mother clipped the others around it, thinking to herself, "It is a butterfly that's been enchanted, and as soon as the scissors touch it, it will fly away." Then her mother cut it, and involuntarily she waved the basket around in the air, pretending it was a net; of course the sweet peas scattered all over the ground, the butterfly somewhere among them. After that, while she was learning "not to be so careless," she could not carry the basket for a week.

For a while—a couple of years, perhaps—the child forgot about the garden. Then one spring when the pansies came from the florist's in strawberry boxes and were set out where the sweet peas used to be; and when the rubber plant and the cactus moved from the front parlor into the place by the grape-vine, where they stayed during the summer, she realized that she wanted a garden more than anything else in the world. She wrote her mother a

letter, asking her for a piece of the flower bed which ran down to the barn, for her very own. She promised all sorts of things, that she would take care of it all by herself, and that her mother should have an unbelievable number of flowers every day.

She left the letter under her mother's work-basket at bedtime. Mother would be sure to find it there. That night she stayed awake for a long time, thinking that perhaps her mother might decide right away to let her have it and come to tell her before she went to sleep. Every time that steps went by the door, she snuggled down into the little hollow of the bed that she particularly loved, and shut her eyes, pretending to be asleep, so that mother would not be angry, and change her mind.

It was still for a very long time. Then the door seemed to open. But it was so quiet that the child could not be sure. Some one came into the room. She tried to open her eyes but they felt very heavy. "It's not fair to peek," said the person. It wasn't her mother's voice, but that did not

strike her as particularly strange. "It is not quite time, but I suppose that since you are awake, you might as well know," the voice went on.

"Can I have it?" the child whispered. "Oh, please, can I have it?"

Her eyes felt as though tiny pieces of sand had crept into them. Things looked very blurry, and yet they seemed to shine.

She blinked several times and then suddenly noticed that there were funny knotty weeds growing in the garden at her feet. She hadn't even noticed a garden until now. Forget-me-nots! She didn't remember planting them. And she was as tall as the sweet peas. It was a much bigger garden than she had asked for. It did not even stop at Cherry Street.

Her eyes felt as though she were going to cry. As far as she could see there were flowers, and Prairie Street was paved with gravel and had a fish pond in the center of it, right where Losey Street crossed it. She must put something around it so that the carriages won't fall into it and hurt the fish.

The paths that went between the flower beds were very springy; she felt as though she were sliding backward with each step, but of course she didn't, because the flowers kept changing all the time, mignonette and larkspur, violets and musk, stiff-necked geraniums, bristling cannas, with the most delightful slippery brown seeds in the pods —she decided to gather enough canna seeds to make a wall around the fish pond. First she tried carrying all three at a time, but they had the most absurd way of slipping out of her fingers and rolling away and hiding under the pieces of earth. Once or twice she sat right down in the path and laughed and laughed, and then it was hard to get up again. She kept slipping down and rolling under pieces of earth.

She had trouble with the wall. Every time she left it to get more seeds those that were already there disappeared. She worked for hours and hours and hours. Finally she thought of a plan. She would lie down—lengthwise she reached from the cannas to the pond. She would pick the seeds with one hand and roll them

down with the other as far as her knees, and then she would push them the rest of the way with her toes. How convenient not to have shoes and stockings on!

It was going to work! She got three seeds at once, gripped in her toes, and then all at once she was very cold. "I've fallen in," flashed across her mind, but before there was any reaction—trying to climb out, or to swim—something changed. . . . It was time to get up and her mother was pulling the covers off—that was the way she always woke one in the mornings.

It was morning. The garden had faded by the time that the child realized that it had grown in the frail fabric of the night —and she was pouring all the cream that was left in the pitcher on her cereal. But all through school that day she thought of her garden, a bewildering mixture, now, of hollyhocks growing in the little patch by the barn, and of long always-receding paths bordered by white phlox. After school her mother told her that she could have a garden. "But you must take all the care of it and not leave it for Ward

or Ellen," she added. The child jumped up and down. At last it had come—the desire of the whole spring.

She ran out to the barn and told Ward that she was going to have a garden. He grinned, and showed her where he kept the garden tools.

"What kind o' garden?" he inquired while she fondled a beautiful trowel which was still new and shiny.

"Oh, a garden," she replied, carelessly.

"Gardens is flowers or vegetables," he persisted.

In the face of this fact she was a bit perplexed. She didn't particularly care whether her garden produced pansies or Brussels sprouts. She wanted something to grow, and grow very quickly.

"Vegetables come up quicker," ventured Ward.

"Which?" she asked.

"Reddisjes 'n' beans 'n' unyons," came the oracular reply.

After consultation with Ellen and mother and with Mr. Carter, who drove Raymond's grocery wagon, she decided to

make a "mixed garden." Mr. Carter gave her some leeks from his garden, and they made a brave showing of green. There were radishes and pansies—a few scrubby plants donated by her mother, and some potatoes which made the ground uneven and had the sweet alyssum planted on top of them and which were always getting uncovered by mistake.

The garden grew. In the summer it began to sprawl about, and the vegetables showed a great reluctance to come up. Only one radish ever turned red. That she pulled one day with a great deal of ceremony, with Ward and Ellen as witnesses, and she brought it in to her mother for supper, lying on a butter plate surrounded by pansy leaves and radish tops.

Fall came, and one by one her plants grew brown and dry and the wind scattered the leaves into whirlpools in the barnyard. The little garden was dead. One day when she was at school Ward spaded it up, planted tulip bulbs, and covered it over with straw.

It had come and gone—the garden she had wanted so keenly—spring and summer

and fall along with it. Now it was time for winter. She knew somehow that she should never want another garden. And a question had begun to grow in her mind. . . . Spring and summer and fall—then winter; and spring again, what then?

THE END

